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World politics, representation, identity: Tibet in Western popular imagination

Dibyesh Anand

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the Department of Politics, Faculty of Social Sciences.

July 2002

Words: 75, 814

Abstract

Though critical international theories have challenged mainstream International Relations (IR) on epistemological, ontological, and methodological grounds, they remain largely focused on the 'West'. I contend that the parochial character of IR can be effectively challenged by a postcolonial IR theory based on conversations between critical international theories and the postcolonial theoretical enterprise. This approach provides new insights into themes of representation and identity. Here, I analyse the general theme of Western representations of the non-West and the specific issue of exoticised Western representations of Tibet (Exotica Tibet). I seek to theorise one crucial element of the Tibet question – Western cultural representations of Tibet and their constitutive (both enabling and constraining) and performative role in Tibetan identity discourses. Exotica Tibet is interrogated in terms of its *poetics* (how Tibet is represented) and its *politics* (what impact these representational regimes have on the identity discourses of the represented).

After a general study of the treatment of representation in international, cultural, and postcolonial studies, Exotica Tibet is framed as an Orientalist construct that shares with other 'Orients' various rhetorical strategies of cultural representation. The theoretical claims are substantiated with an empirical analysis of Western representations in various cultural sites during the twentieth century. This sets the stage for analysing the politics of Exotica Tibet. By examining Tibetan identity discourse ('Tibetanness') in the cultural and political spheres, I not only consider the productive effect of representations, but more importantly, provide new ways of theorising identity through postcolonialism-inspired symbolic geography and a discursive approach. Thus, the poetics and politics of Exotica Tibet mark a new way of enculturating political analysis and politicising cultural criticism. Postcolonial analysis contributes to the changing of IR into a *discourse of empowering criticality*.

Dedication and acknowledgements

There are a number of individuals and institutions that I wish to thank for their assistance in the completion of this project. The University of Bristol Postgraduate Scholarship and the Overseas Research Scholarship funded my Ph.D. The *British International Studies* research award (2001) and the *British Academy Society for South Asian Studies* travel grant (2000) enabled archival research and field trip. The Tibetan government-in-exile's *Department of Information and International Relations* at Dharamsala not only provided me with valuable information, but also the initial guidance on a possible research topic at the formative stage.

I would like to thank my supervisor Jutta Weldes for her encouragement, support, guidance, and patience. My gratitude for Judith Squires, Vernon Hewitt, Philip Darby, Robbie Barnett, Barry Hindess, and most of all, Christiaan Klieger. My parents' (Runa Jha and Namo Nath Jha) expectations and frequent question since the first year: 'when are you submitting your thesis?' kept me on track.

I'd like to dedicate this thesis with love to Nitasha Kaul, my intellectual and life companion – for travelling together with me. Without her, the journey, and this journeyer, would have been very different.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

SIGNED: *Dibyesh Anand*

DATE: *3/10/02*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Maps	
<i>Figure I Tibet in Asia</i>	viii
<i>Figure II 'Political' Tibet: U-Tsang</i>	
<i>'Ethnic' Tibet: U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo</i>	ix
<i>Figure III Dharamsala in India</i>	
<i>[The seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile]</i>	x
 Chapter 1	
Introduction	1
1A. The Tibet question	3
1A.i. Historical status	5
1A.ii. Western representations	9
1B. Chapter outline	13
 Chapter 2	
Deparochialising IR: the case for a postcolonial critical approach	17
2A. Third world issues and IR	18
2B. The postcolonial enterprise	22
2C. IR and PS: divided sky, divided horizon?	28
2D. The possibility for postcolonial IR theory	33
2E. Conclusion: a call for a new beginning	39
 Chapter 3	
The theme of representation in international, cultural, and postcolonial studies	41
3A. Representation, identity, and IR	43
3B. Theorising representation	48
3C. Postcolonialism and representation	54
3D. Exotica Tibet as an Orientalist construct	58
3E. Conclusion	70
 Chapter 4	
Western representations of the 'Other': rhetorical modes and strategies	71
4A. Modes of representation	72
4A.i. Essentialism	72
4A.ii. Stereotyping the Other	75
4A.iii. Exoticism as exoticising	81
4B. Strategies and techniques of representation	90
4B.i. Archive	91
4B.ii. Gaze	98
4B.iii. Differentiation-classification	101
4B.iv. Debasement-idealisation	103
4B.v. Eroticisation-moralisation	105
4B.vi. Chronopolitics	110
4B.vii. Infantilisation-gerontification	114
4B.viii. Naturalisation	117
4B. ix. Self-affirmation-self-criticism	118

4C. Conclusion	121
Chapter 5	
Poetics of Exotica Tibet	122
5A. Imperialism	126
5A.i. <i>Younghusband's 'India and Tibet': an imperial descriptive account</i>	130
5B. Tibet: a land of religion	135
5B.i. <i>Waddell and the study of 'degenerate' 'Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism'</i>	137
5B.ii. <i>The Tibetan book of the dead</i>	138
5C. The lama	140
5C.i. <i>'Kim' and the Teshoo lama</i>	140
5C.ii. <i>The Dalai Lama</i>	143
5D. Temporal and spiritual journeying to the 'rooftop of the world'	145
5D.i. <i>David-Neel's 'Journey to Lhasa'</i>	148
5D.ii. <i>Matthiessen's search for 'The snow leopard'</i>	150
5E. Land of mysticism and fantasy	152
5E.i. <i>'The third eye' of Rampa the mystifier</i>	153
5F. Tibet as Shangri-la	155
5F.i. <i>The 'Lost horizon' / the last horizon</i>	157
5G. The West's playground	160
5G.i. <i>Harrer's 'Seven years in Tibet'</i>	162
5H. China and Exotica Tibet	163
5I. Conclusion	164
Chapter 6	
Politics of Exotica Tibet: Tibetan (trans-)national identity	166
6A. The political discourse of Tibetanness	169
6B. Tibet as an imag(in)ing nation	172
6C. Discourse of Tibetanness as articulated within Tibet	176
6D. (Dis)placed Tibetans: nationalism in exile	178
6D.i. <i>Interaction with Western audience: Exotica Tibet</i>	180
6D.ii. <i>Transnationalism in the service of nationalism</i>	184
6E. Tibetan national identity: tensions within	189
6F. Conclusion	192
Chapter 7	
Re-imag(in)ing Tibetanness: Postcolonial symbolic geography, culture, and the politics of Exotica Tibet	193
7A. Symbolism of Dharamsala: a contested terrain	196
7B. Dharamsala as a temporary home: the dominant story	199
7C. Culture and the politics of place: some conceptual problems with the dominant story	203
7D. Challenging the dominant paradigm: reading cultural identity in terms of <i>roots</i> and <i>routes</i>	208
7E. Conclusion: affirming Tibetanness	

through its problematisation	214
Chapter 8	
Concluding remarks on world politics, representation, identity	215
Bibliography	220
Glossary	268



FIG. I. TIBET IN ASIA



FIG II

'POLITICAL' TIBET: U-TSANG

'ETHNIC' TIBET: U-TSANG, KHAM AND AMDO

Outline Map of India

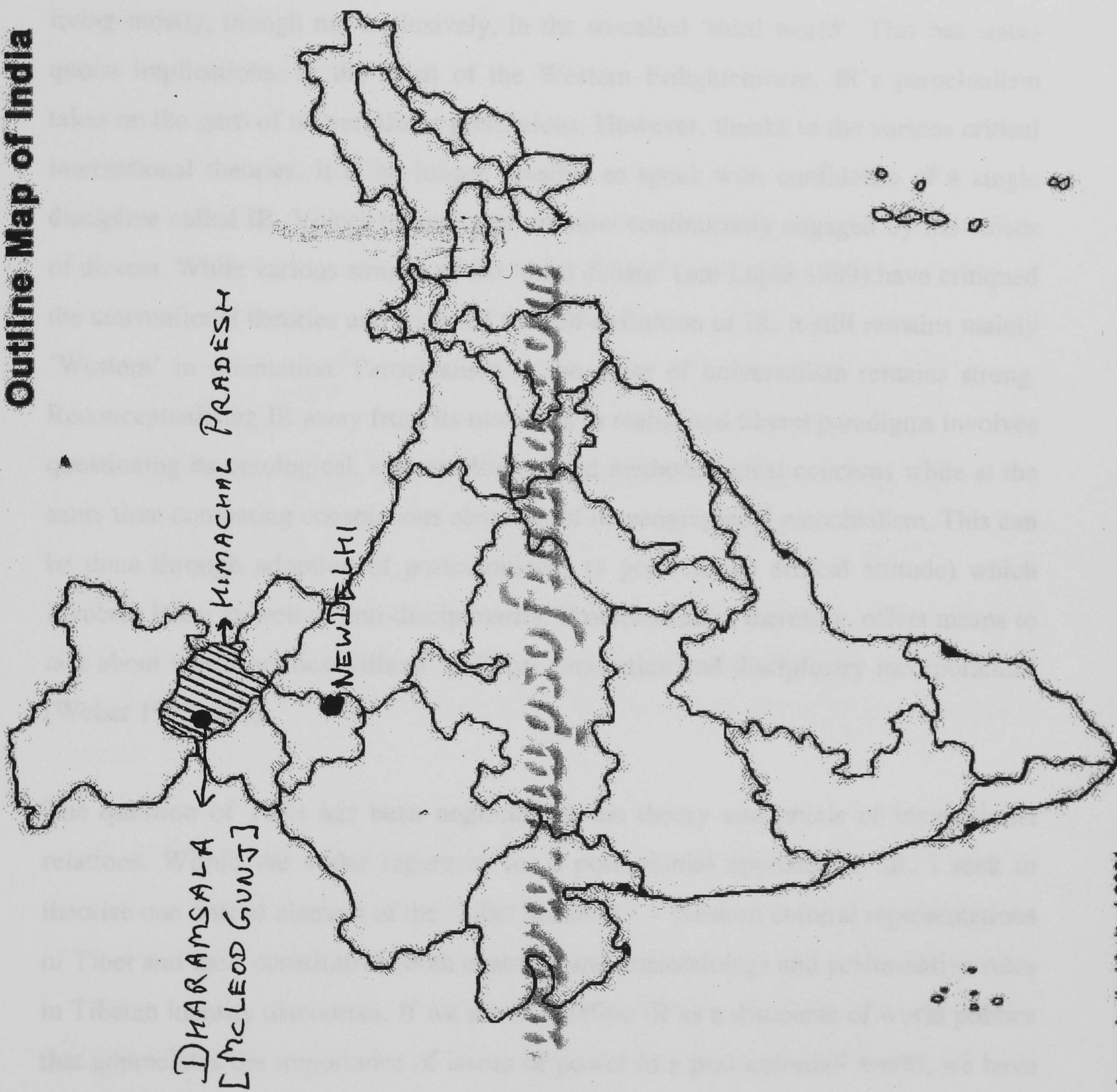


FIG. III DHARAMSALA IN INDIA
[THE SEAT OF THE TIBETAN GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE]

X

Chapter 1: Introduction

‘I am not erudite enough to be interdisciplinary, but I can break rules’
(Spivak 1999: xiii)

Mainstream International Relations discipline (IR) remains preoccupied with the ‘big’ issues of war and order, power and security. In the process it ignores, marginalises and trivialises issues that affect the everyday lives of a majority of the world’s population living mostly, though not exclusively, in the so-called ‘third world’. This has status quoist implications. In the spirit of the Western Enlightenment, IR’s parochialism takes on the garb of universalistic pretensions. However, thanks to the various critical international theories, it is no longer possible to speak with confidence of a single discipline called IR. Voices of authority are now continuously engaged by the voices of dissent. While various strands of the ‘third debate’ (see Lapid 1989) have critiqued the conventional theories and widened the self-definition of IR, it still remains mainly ‘Western’ in orientation. Parochialism in the guise of universalism remains strong. Reconceptualising IR away from its moorings in realist and liberal paradigms involves questioning its ontological, epistemological and methodological concerns while at the same time combating conspicuous elements of its geographical parochialism. This can be done through adoption of postcoloniality (a postcolonial critical attitude) which involves inter- as well as anti-disciplinarity. Postcoloniality, therefore, offers means to talk about world politics without ‘political evacuation and disciplinary incorporation’ (Weber 1999: 435).

The question of Tibet has been neglected in the theory and praxis of international relations. Within the wider argument for a postcolonial approach to IR, I seek to theorise one crucial element of the ‘Tibet question’¹ – Western cultural representations of Tibet and their constitutive (both enabling and constraining) and performative roles in Tibetan identity discourses. If we are to redefine IR as a discourse of world politics that appreciates the importance of issues of power in a post-colonial² world, we have

¹ I use the term ‘Tibet question’ to refer to Tibet as an issue in world politics. By using the interrogative word, I foreground the Tibetan issue as a ‘problem’, in line with the ‘Palestine question’ or the ‘Irish question’. It is more than ‘the conflict over the political status of Tibet vis-à-vis China’ (Melvyn Goldstein in Goldstein and Kapstein 1998: 14; see also Heberer 1995). Crucially, it includes an examination of the very categories of ‘Tibet’ and ‘Tibetans’.

² As I will explain in chapter 2, I use hyphenated form of ‘post-colonial’ in its usual temporal sense (for post-decolonisation era) and unhyphenated ‘postcolonial’ as representing a critical way of thinking and writing.

to take on board concerns such as the ones expressed here. After all, Tibetanness is a typical postcolonial/post-colonial narrative of identity politics combining processes of migration with the human desire for fixity.

In order to go ‘beyond the dominant rituals of International Relations theory and practice’ (George 1996: 70) and understand IR as ‘a *philosophical anthropology of everyday life on a global scale*’ (Campbell 1996: 24; emphasis in original), we must foreground political concerns from ‘beyond’ the West. Since modern theories of IR can be read as ‘a crucial site in which attempts to think otherwise about political possibilities are constrained by categories and assumptions that contemporary political analysis is encouraged to take for granted’ (Walker 1993: 5), thinking differently demands a challenging of the policing of legitimate and illegitimate course of enquiry. This thesis contributes to this challenging and agrees with Roland Bleiker’s call to ‘forget IR theory’ since

By articulating critique in relation to arguments advanced by orthodox IR theory, the impact of critical voices remains confined within the larger discursive boundaries that were established through the initial framing of debates. In view of these restraints...[we have to explore]...ways through which genealogical critique can be *supplemented* with a process of *forgetting the object of critique*, of theorizing world politics without being constrained by the agendas, issues, and terminologies that are presented by orthodox debates (1997: 58; emphasis in original).

Postcoloniality offers a way of combining critique with affirmation of agency. Rob Walker suggests, ‘theoretical discourse about international politics could benefit substantially from an increased sensitivity to its own cultural horizons and ideological functions’ (1984: 19).

As Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair put it, ‘the postcolonial has relevance for the study of IR because it provides insight into the ways in which the imperial juncture is implicated in the construction of contemporary relations of power, hierarchy, and domination’ (2002: 11-12). Postcolonial international theories are useful for addressing eurocentrism in IR. But the task is not only about looking at concerns and issues affecting people in the non-Western world. It also involves examining old themes of state, power, war, and peace from new and different perspectives. For example, within the rubric of conventional IR Tibet is mostly seen in terms of its role in Sino-Western relations or Sino-Indian border disputes, thus effectively denying subjectivity to the Tibetans themselves. This resonates with the early twentieth century British preoccupation with Tibet’s role in the ‘Great Game’ – the imperialist rivalry

between the British and the Russians in Asia. The analysis of the Tibet question using postcolonial IR theory entails scrutinising the vocabulary afforded by conventional IR and considering hitherto undertheorised issues such as imperialism, history, diaspora, representation, and identity.

This thesis contends that the parochial character of IR can be effectively challenged by a postcolonial criticality (critical attitude), or postcoloniality. Postcoloniality can be based on conversations between critical international theories and the postcolonial theoretical enterprise. Such an approach provides new insights into themes of representation and identity – it politicises culture and encultures politics. Here, the case for a postcolonial IR is made by looking at the general theme of representation (and its productive relation with identity) and the specific issue of Western representations and Tibetan identity discourses. What Roxanne Doty writes about representation of the South (the third world) by the North (the West) reflects my use of the term ‘representation’ here:

By representation I mean the ways in which the South as been discursively represented by policy makers, scholars, journalists, and others in the North. This does not refer to the ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’ that the North has discovered and accumulated about the South, but rather to the ways in which regimes of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’ have been produced. The contexts within which specific encounters have taken place and the issues relevant to these contexts have been occasions for the proliferation and circulation of various representations (1996b: 2).

I do not see categories such as the ‘West’ and ‘Tibet’ as natural and pre-given but as ‘non-foundational and constantly reproduced in relational terms’ (Krishna 1999: xxi). My endeavour is inspired by the practice of what Michael Shapiro terms ‘insurrectional textuality’ (1989a: 13) and what Bleiker calls ‘disruptive writing’, a process of tackling an issue not by way of well-rehearsed debates, but through an alternative set of texts and narratives. In line with this, ‘International relations, then, is to be treated primarily as a broadly sketched theme of inquiry, rather than a disciplinary set of rules that determine where to locate and how to study global politics’ (Bleiker 2000: 19).

1A. The Tibet question³

³ The discussion on the Tibet question appears in greater detail in my contribution ‘A story to be told: IR, postcolonialism, and the discourse of Tibetan (trans)national identity’ (Anand 2002b). I thank Routledge for giving me the permission to use it.

Even though the issues raised by the Tibet question are international in scope and there is an increasing recognition that it remains one of the unsolved problems in world politics, Tibet (see Fig. I) hardly figures in the international politics literature. When it does come up, it is either as a footnote to the Cold War⁴ or as a pawn in Sino-Western (see Sautman 1999; Xu Guangui 1997) or Sino-Indian relations (see Ghosh 1977; Ginsburgs 1960; Mehra 1980). This neglect reflects a web of strategic interests of major Western and regional powers, IR's focus on relations between states and, finally, its ethnocentrism.⁵ All this was evident after 1959, when China acquired complete control over Tibet, giving up the uneasy accommodation with the Dalai Lama-led Tibetan government that had lasted for almost eight years (1951 to 1959). Despite the international condemnation of Chinese action in both strongly worded statements such as those of the International Commission of Jurists and feeble statements in the United Nations General Assembly,⁶ the states of the world accepted the Tibet question as an 'internal' Chinese matter.

Realist and liberal strands of IR theory seem incapable of engaging with the complexity of the Tibet question, though the emergence of critical schools within the field suggests the potential for a better understanding. The Tibetan issue can be studied in terms of themes such as sovereignty/suzerainty, imperialism, human rights, representation, identity, nationalism, diaspora, and transnationalism. An approach which highlights the interlinkages between these themes, and also emphasises the need for some sort of dialogue between critical IR and postcolonialism better addresses the complexity surrounding it. Critical international theories provide sophisticated investigations of some of these themes, notably sovereignty, representation, and

⁴ For an analysis of CIA operations in Tibet during the early years of cold war, see Conboy and Morrison 2002; Knaus 1999; Laird 2002; *The shadow circus* (2001); Shakya 1999.

⁵ One other reason for this could be, what Stephen Chan argues is, IR's paucity in understanding matters of religions and religious values contributing to the fact that it 'has nothing to say about the contest between China and Tibet to ordain and maintain Lamas' (2000: 566). The most famous of these contests is over the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, usually considered as second in religious hierarchy within Tibetan Buddhism (at least within the dominant Gelukpa sect), next only to the Dalai Lama.

⁶ The International Commission of Jurists (<http://www.icj.org>) in Geneva brought out two early reports on Tibet -- 'The question of Tibet and the rule of law' (1959) and 'Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic' (1960) – and continues to do so. The UN General Assembly has passed three resolutions on Tibet: 1353 (XIV) 1959; 1723 (XVI) 1961; 2079 (XX) 1965. For details on these as well as other international resolutions on Tibet, see Department of Information and International Relations (1997).

nationalism. But themes of imperialism, diaspora, Western representational practices, and transnational identity require insights from postcolonial theory.

The later chapters will discuss in more detail the aspects of the Tibet question concerning identity and representation. To provide a flavour of things to come, here I provide a brief outline of the Tibet question, focusing on the historical status of Tibet vis-à-vis China and on Tibetan (trans)nationalism within the diasporic population. The debate over the historical status is not dealt with in detail in the thesis. However, Tibetan diasporic (trans)nationalism will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 6 and 7 in order to highlight the power of representational regimes in constituting and containing the discourses through which modern collective identity is expressed. In these discourses Tibetanness can be seen as a typical postcolonial/post-colonial narrative of identity politics as it is constituted and contested by dominant and resistant categories of nationalism, culture, gender, class, race, and religion.

IA.i. Historical status

The status of Tibet vis-à-vis China has been articulated in terms of various concepts, including sovereignty, suzerainty, independence, autonomy, vassalage, protectorate, overlordship, and colony (for a range of views, see Chiu and Dreyer 1989; Government of Tibet n.d.; Norbu 1990; Shakabpa 1984; Smith 1996; Van Praag 1987; Wang Jiawei and Nyima Gyaincain 1997; Wang Lixiong 2002). However, for the most part, it is sovereignty that is asserted and contested. On the one hand, the Chinese state marshals arguments buttressing its historical claim of sovereignty over Tibet; on the other, Tibetan exiles and their supporters make counter claims and assert that Tibet was for all practical purposes independent from China. Though both sides mobilise history to make their claims, the concept of sovereignty is often left unproblematised.⁷ Crucially, the revolutionary communist regime that took over China in 1949 had no qualms over staking claims in Tibet based on a debatable imperial legacy, which it denounced in other spheres. The Chinese, who during the nineteenth century rejected

⁷ This is not surprising as sovereignty is an ‘essentially uncontested concept’ (Walker 1990: 159). Though state sovereignty is the primary constitutive principle of modern political life, its treatment as an obvious ‘fact’ tells us ‘especially about the limits within which that contestability is constrained, ritualized, and fixed through a historically specific account of the possibilities of political community and human identity’ (*Ibid.*). For different perspectives on sovereignty, see Bartelson 1995; Biersteker and Weber 1996; Hannum 1990; Hinsley 1986;

the Western mode of international relations as alien, exerted their control over Tibet after 1950 using the absolutist modern European conception of sovereignty. Importantly, in the process it also ignored the different worldviews within which the Mongol and Manchu emperors interacted with Tibet (see Klieger 1994; Norbu 1990; Shakya 1999). Unlike the British, who used ‘suzerainty’ and ‘autonomy’ to designate Sino-Tibetan relations, since 1905, the Chinese have consistently argued that its position is that of a sovereign and not a suzerain. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, even though there is no space for ‘suzerainty’ within international law and politics and all the states recognise the Chinese claim of ‘sovereignty’ over Tibet, the pro-Tibet lobby contests this assertion of sovereignty by highlighting the difference between suzerainty and sovereignty within international law. As Lassa Oppenheim argued: ‘Suzerainty is by no means sovereignty. It is a kind of international guardianship, since the vassal State is either absolutely or mainly represented internationally by the suzerain State’ (quoted in Van Praag 1987:107).

The genealogy of the modern idea of sovereignty also reveals its close nexus with European imperialism. Until the first half of the twentieth century, the international community of states was based on a double standard. While the ‘civilised’ world (read as Europe, and later the United States and Japan) had a right to sovereign statehood, the rest of the world was open to various forms of imperial control. The ‘[d]egree of civilisation necessary to maintain international relations was considered as one of the conditions for statehood’ (Hannum 1990: 16). The Tibetan example is typical of how imperial efforts throughout the non-European world were empowered by Western understandings of the non-Western states. Not only did imperial powers actively delegitimise non-Western modes of sovereignty, they refused to recognise the intricacies of non-Western inter-state relations (see Strang 1996). Within this context, at the turn of the twentieth century, the traditional Sino-Tibetan relationship was considered by the British to be ‘irrational’ and lacking legitimacy because it did not conform to the modern European ideas of diplomacy. For a large part of the nineteenth century, to the British in India, Tibet was a ‘forbidden land’ ruled by ‘strange lamas’ under some form of Chinese control. While some, including George Bogle, named this control ‘sovereignty’ (Markham 1876: 195), most used the term ‘overlordship’ or ‘suzerainty’. This was based on the presence of Chinese *amban* (‘resident’) in Lhasa,

Hoffman 1998; James 1986; Krasner 1999; Weber 1995.

the claims of the Manchu emperor, and the refusal of the Tibetans to clarify the situation. Due to their own familiarity with feudalism and with the Chinese international system of tributary relations, it is not surprising that the British interpreted the Sino-Tibetan relations in terms of suzerainty and a protectorate system.

British policy towards Tibet was shaped by conflicting dynamics including the infeasibility of direct colonisation, its strategic location as a buffer state in Central Asia, British commercial interests in the Chinese Empire, and the like (see Norbu 1990). These conflicting interests dictated the ambiguous policy in which Tibet's relation with the Chinese Empire was seen in terms of Chinese suzerainty and Tibetan autonomy. In a memorandum of 17 August 1912, the British government clarified its stance: 'while recognising the Chinese suzerainty, they were not prepared to admit the right of China to interfere in the internal administration of Tibet...' (Foreign Office 1920: 41). Thus, 'Outer Tibet would become an autonomous state under Chinese suzerainty and British protectorate' (*Ibid.*: 43). The failure of the British to understand the complex relation had as much to do with their heady faith in the superiority of European norms as with their conflicting interests in the region.

Traditionally, political actors interpreted and understood their inter-state relations in vocabularies familiar to them. Sino-Tibetan relations were no exception. The same relations could have been understood by the Chinese imperial officials in terms of Confucian tributary relations, and by the Tibetans as Buddhist *mchod-yon*.⁸ This does not validate the primacy of either worldview, but reveals the complexity of the issue involved. Grounding the relation in some universally accepted terms was unnecessary within the Chinese as well as the Tibetan worldview. Personal, moral and spiritual overtones were a significant part of the relations; brutal take-over was not. Influence of the *amban* varied according to many factors, including the strength of the incumbent Dalai Lama. Even when China had 'the upper hand' (Bataille 1992: 33), Tibet 'enjoyed local autonomy over domestic matters' (Grunfeld 1987: 57), and more

⁸ While some have argued that *mchod-yon*, 'patron-priest relations', was the main characteristic of Sino-Tibetan world (see Klieger 1994), others have clarified that this was more about personal relationships between rulers and not about statehood (see Barnett 1998). Tsering Shakya points out that the concept indicates that the Tibetans viewed the Chinese emperor only as a secular institution which is far from the case. Manchu emperors, for instance, were often referred to as Jampeyang Gongma, the incarnation of Manjushri, defining them not merely as secular patrons but as occupying a space within a Buddhist pantheon exercising some measure of secular authority in Tibet (1999: xxiii).

significantly, on the basis of simple experienced reality, Tibetans considered themselves not to be a part of China (Barnett 1998). However, this traditional relationship became problematic when the socio-cultural and political environment was altered. This occurred first with the arrival of Western colonial powers in Asia, and second, with the transformation of the traditional Confucian-dominated Chinese polity towards a more occidental political system, which produced Republican China and the growth of Chinese nationalism (Shakya 1999: xxiii). Since the early twentieth century, as the Chinese learnt the modern European diplomatic language, they began to assert their relationship in terms of sovereignty. Tibetans, on the other hand, were late in adjusting to the modern world and refused to comply with any treaties between British India and China concerning Tibet. Thus, it was a ‘forceful interpretation of Sino-Tibetan relations in terms of European international law and *praxis* of (British) imperialism’ (Norbu 1990: 67; emphasis in original) that lies at the genesis of Tibet question, not some intractable nationalist and historical conflict between the Chinese and the Tibetans. The Westernisation of international relations made it inevitable that when China gained control over Tibet in 1951, it was no more the traditional symbolic relationship, but an absolute rule. For the first time in its history, through the ‘Seventeen Point Agreement’,⁹ Tibet acknowledged Chinese sovereignty in writing, leaving no space for an ambiguous term like suzerainty. The internationalisation of the Westphalian international order based on sovereign statehood had a differential effect on Tibet and China – it allowed the regional hegemon (China) to assert and exercise control over Tibet.

Thus, the extrapolation of Western ideas in a situation where people operated on a totally different worldview has facilitated the victimisation of communities like the Tibetans. Developments during the era of imperialism have serious ramifications in many parts of the contemporary world. Conventional IR has sought to ignore the history and politics of imperialism (by considering it to be a legitimate area of inquiry primarily for imperial history) and is therefore not well suited to provide a contextual understanding of several international problems like the Tibet question. If one had to go into a detailed analysis of the debate over historical status of Tibet, critical international theories would contribute to the historicisation of the concept of

⁹ Formally known as ‘The Agreement of the Central People’s Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet’, this was signed in Beijing on 23 May 1951.

sovereignty, while postcolonialism would help bare its linkage with imperialism. I do not undertake this task here. Instead, in this thesis, I focus on highlighting the centrality of the poetics and the politics of Western representations of the non-Western identity as a step toward deparochialising IR.

IA.ii. Western representations

The power of representation and discourse is also critical for understanding the Tibet question and Tibetanness (Tibetan identity). As postcolonial works drawing upon Foucauldian ideas have argued, this power not only constrains and contains, but is also productive (see Said 1978). The very idea of 'Tibet' and what it means to be 'Tibetan' is constructed and contested within a matrix of identity and representation discourses, thus making it an integral part of the Tibet question. Representations have productive influence over the discourses of Tibetanness since the Tibetans, especially those living in diaspora,¹⁰ self-reflexively appropriate these images as a part of their own identity.

When studying the issue of representation and identity in the specific context of Tibetans, we may make an important distinction between the poetics and the politics of representations of Tibet. These distinctions relate closely to two streams within social constructionism – semiotic and discursive approaches to representation (see Hall 1997a). A semiotic approach is concerned with how language produces meaning, the *poetics*. On the other hand, a discursive approach is concerned with the *effects and consequences* of representation, its *politics*. A semiotic approach entails examining how Tibet is imagined within the Western world or in China by looking at popular as well as statist discourses. On the other hand, a discursive approach involves studying the effects of these representations on the identity of the represented (the Tibetans) and the representer (the West). In this thesis, my focus is on Western representations and its impact on Tibetan identity. This is done as an opening gesture without denying the importance of other aspects, including the Chinese representations.

The importance of Chinese representational regimes for the Tibet question is to warn against reducing postcolonial critique to turning 'all people from non-Western cultures

¹⁰ The emphasis on Tibetans living in exile does not deny the fact that Tibetans living within Tibet too have to negotiate with Western and Chinese representations (see Adams 1996, 1998; Barnett and Akiner 1996; Goldstein and Kapstein 1998; Schwartz 1996).

into a generalized “subaltern” that is then used to flog an equally generalized “West!”” (Chow 1993: 13). Knowledge production about Tibet, especially since the mid-twentieth century when the Chinese communists consolidated their political control, is no longer the preserve of Europeans. Very much in the tradition of Orientalist scholarship and British imperialist writings, the manufacturing of scholarly truths about Tibet within the Chinese academies is implicated in the service of the political regime. Chinese representations of Tibetans as essentially backward, primitive, and barbaric are witnessed not only at the popular level, but more dangerously within state discourse too (see Kolas 1998; Shakya 2002; Wei Jingsheng 1998; for Han Chinese representations of minorities, see Blum 2000; Dikotter 1992; Gladney 1994). Analysis of the Chinese representations of Tibet¹¹ shows how Tibetans, like most of the non-Han Chinese, are seen as an exotic but backward people requiring Chinese leadership to help them progress.¹² Apart from the claim of historical sovereignty, Chinese communist nationalism has also justified its control over Tibet in terms of its modernising role, its overthrow of the ‘feudalism’ existing in pre-1959 Tibet, and its liberation of serfs and women (see Kolas 1998; Makley 1997, 1999). The debate about the validity of these class¹³ and gender analyses of ‘Old Tibet’ is not my concern here. It is sufficient to underline that these representational practices have serious implications for Chinese policy toward Tibet. For instance, in the name of liberating Tibetan women from the clutches of tradition, not only has the state attacked religious practices and structures, but it has also forced women to undergo modern ‘family planning’ (see Kikhang 1997: 110-16).

¹¹ To muddle the picture, an examination of the Chinese representations of Tibet cannot be separated from Western Sinology, and its constituent ‘Red China’ image that prevailed during the Cold War.

¹² The notion of Tibet’s lack of development due to ‘cultural backwardness’ is very strong in Chinese state policies ever since the 1951 Seventeen Point Agreement. Development as a rationale for Chinese control is also found in the writings of those sympathetic to the Communist regime (see Han Suyin 1977) as well as many Chinese dissidents (see Xu Mingxu 2000). Unfortunately this has resonance with the self-justificatory tone of the civilising mission within Western imperialism. This patronising tone is also evident in Wang Lixiong who in the name of recognising Tibetan agency tends to erase it by tracing the roots of ‘intense religiosity’ of the Tibetans to ‘the terrors of their natural environment’ (2002: 91). For more on this ‘environmental determinism’, see B.viii in chapter 4.

¹³ Tashi Tsering’s autobiography provides a nuanced critique of the rigid class structure of traditional society as well as his disillusionment with the Chinese rhetoric of a ‘free’ Tibet. Instead of seeking to provide simplistic answers, through both his experience of growing up as a ‘serf’ in ‘Old Tibet’ and as a revolutionary in ‘New Tibet’, Tsering argues that the question is far more complex (see Goldstein et al. 1997).

The thematic and the structural content of Chinese representations resonate with the Western representations of Tibet. *Exotica Tibet* (henceforth used as a shorthand for the exoticised – both positive and negative – Western representation of Tibet) requires a detailed treatment which will be offered in chapters 4 and 5. I can only sketch a very brief outline here. Geographically and culturally, Tibet's peripheral place gave permission for many Europeans and Americans to use it as an imaginative escape, as a sort of time out, a relaxation from rigid rational censorship of their own society. This explains the unease of many Westerners with the 'modernisation' of Tibet under the aegis of the Chinese state. Hence writings about Tibet are sometimes conservative protests against modernism and the changing world order and at other times part of counter-cultural trends resisting the globalising gesture of modernisation. The presence of opposites and contradictions within Western imaginings of Tibet is not new. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, such imaginings have been characterised by 'a play of opposites: the pristine and the polluted, the authentic and the derivative, the holy and the demonic, the good and the bad' (Lopez 1998: 10). While some held disparaging views about Tibet, others extolled it. The strategies of essentialism, reductionism, exoticism and stereotyping are common to positive as well as negative representations. Debasement and exoticisation are part of the same representational regime (I discuss rhetorical tropes common to Western representations of the non-West in chapter 4; see also Spurr 1993). Both sides flatten Tibet's complexities and competing histories into stereotypes, which operate through adjectives.

This Exotica Tibet was not confined to the cultural sphere. It influenced and was in turn influenced by political processes. Accounts by British Indian officials like Charles Bell and Hugh Richardson show that their 'more prosaic view did not destroy this exotic representation but tacitly encouraged it' (McKay 1997: 207). The importance of Exotica Tibet in my understanding of the Tibet question lies in the impact it has on the very construction and contestation of the categories of 'Tibet' and 'Tibetans' – *the politics of representation*. For, the language of stereotype about Tibet 'not only creates knowledge about Tibet, in many ways it creates "Tibet", a "Tibet" that Tibetans in exile have come to appropriate and deploy in an effort to gain both standing in exile and independence for their country' (Lopez 1998: 10). Interaction with a Western audience is a very important dynamic shaping Tibetan identity/Tibetanness in the diaspora. This is an area that has received substantial

attention from scholars only in the last decade of the twentieth century (see Harris 1999; Klieger 1994; Korom 1997a, 1997b).

An examination of the politics of representation informed by the discursive approach locates expositions on Tibet in the context of imperialism, neo-colonialism, nationalism, Orientalism, and development. It also focuses on the implication of such exercises in image making on those who are subjected to it – the Tibetans. There is no doubt that initially at least the Tibetans had little control over the way they were represented in the outside world and thus had to negotiate within the representational regimes already in place. For instance, since for the Western ‘Tibetophiles’ the practice of Tibetan Buddhism is the only cultural expression through which exiles can perpetuate the dream of their lost paradise, Tibetans often have to make their case in terms of the threatened extinction of a unique culture (Harris 1999: 38). But rather than painting Tibetans as mere victims, we have to recognise that they have been active in the appropriation and internalisation of Western representations, and in the creation and presentation of their own cultural, political and religious identity. Soliciting international support has been one of the main strategies of the Tibetan diaspora elite. Support in the form of ‘Free Tibet’ movements is often based on the image of ‘Tibet as defenceless underdog, a spiritual society that was minding its own business only to get crushed under the jackboot of an aggressive, materialist overlord’ (Schell 2000: 206). Though the Tibetan global publicity campaign consciously portrays Tibetans as victims of Chinese oppression, this does not deny them their subjectivity. Even the cultivation of this victimisation paradigm reflects the agency of Tibetans. They have made conscious and extensive use of Western discourses, such as psychology, philosophy, physics, personal growth, and holistic health, in their attempts both to communicate with the Westerners and to reconstitute themselves in conditions of exile (Bishop 1997: 67). Tibetans have also colluded with, as well as contested, various Western images of Tibet.

Thus, representations have played a constitutive and performative role in identity discourses among Tibetans. This is true in the arena not only of cultural identity but also of political identity, especially in the diaspora. While recognising the asymmetrical power relations involved, we may look at Tibetanness as a product of creative negotiations of diasporic Tibetans with dominant representational regimes, as

a process of resistant appropriation of dominant identity concepts including transnationalism, sovereignty, indigeneity, universal human rights, and diaspora.

Therefore, the West is an important constituent in the Tibetan issue — as a political actor and as a cultural construct. Instead of understanding the role of the West as one of an interpreter/observer, it should be considered a crucial actor in framing various aspects of the Tibet question. While internal dynamics of the wider Tibetan society and the China factor play a very important role in any discussion of the Tibet question, ‘the West’ too, both at the level of theory and of praxis, acts as a factor not only in the shaping of the question but also in creating a vocabulary for possible answers. This is evident when the Tibetan issue is framed either in terms of sovereignty or in terms of international human rights, when the Tibetans have to reinvent their tradition in order to make it compatible with the principles of nationalism and transnationalism. In all these acts, the most important audience is the international community, itself often a euphemism for Western states. This thesis foregrounds the crucial constitutive role of the West in the Tibet question.

1B. Chapter outline

Though critical international theories have challenged mainstream IR on epistemological, ontological, and methodological grounds, they remain largely focused on the West. The main thrust of my thesis is to take a step towards deparochialising IR. In the next chapter, I contend that drawing upon postcolonial theory can rectify the geographical parochialism of the discipline of IR. Although conventional IR theory and postcolonial theory are worlds apart, a contingent ground for conversation is afforded by the developments within IR since the ‘third debate’.

The theme in chapter 3 is the representation of the non-West by the West within critical IR, cultural and postcolonial theory. After examining the treatment of representation within critical IR, I highlight its limitations. The limitations, I argue, can be overcome if we take developments within cultural and postcolonial studies more seriously. The focus here will be on the ‘Orientalism critique’ initiated by Edward Said (1978). Exotica Tibet is presented as an Orientalist construct.

In chapter 4, within the wider ‘Orientalism critique’, I will critically examine Western practices of representing the non-West during and after the period of European colonialism. These are not epiphenomenal. While my discussion is mainly about Western colonial representational discourse, it must be remembered that these tropes are central to the production and reproduction of neocolonial relations even in the contemporary period. In this chapter, I look at rhetorical tropes in terms of three general *modes* (and possible ways of challenging them) that underlie all Western representations of the non-West and then discuss some important *strategies* that are deployed to operationalise Orientalist constructs such as Exotica Tibet. The three significant modes of representation are essentialism, stereotyping, and exoticism. The strategies will be studied under the headings of archive, gaze, differentiation-classification, debasement-idealisation, eroticisation-moralisation, chronopolitics, infantilisation-gerontification, naturalisation, and self-affirmation-self-criticism.

In chapter 5 I apply the theoretical framework developed in the previous two chapters to some specific and prominent cultural sites within which Exotica Tibet has operated in the twentieth century. This includes films, novels, and travelogues. The idea is not to provide an exhaustive list of the cultural sites that have contributed to the creation of the *imagin-o-scape* of Exotica Tibet, but to lay bare the representational strategies operating within them. This is an elaboration of the poetics of Exotica Tibet – *how* Tibet has been represented throughout the twentieth century.

After this encounter with poetics, in the next two chapters, I shift attention to the politics¹⁴ of Exotica Tibet – examining the impact on cultural and political identities of people who are subjects of, and thus subjected to, the representational regime. Just as exoticism has had an ambiguous effect on the attitudes of Western states and people towards the Tibet question, it has a very significant effect on identity discourses among the Tibetans. The very category of ‘Tibetan’ gets constructed within the matrices of these representational regimes. Tibetanness is not some essence of Tibetan life but is the politicised articulation of themes of identity and difference, of commonality and distinctiveness. And indeed the representational regimes, even though productive, tend to restrict and contain the options available for self-

¹⁴ It should be noted that I use ‘politics’ in a wider sense of the term incorporating not only a study of political, but also cultural identity. This is in the spirit of ‘enculturing politics’ and ‘politicising culture’, which is one of the driving forces behind this thesis.

expression. This productive-cum-restrictive impact of Western representations on Tibetan identity reflects a trait of modern representational regimes in general.

In chapters 6 and 7, the specific case of Tibetanness (Tibetan national identity) as articulated in the diaspora will be taken up to highlight the politics of representation and thus support the case for a postcolonial critical approach to world politics. As I will argue, Exotica Tibet is an important, but not an exhaustive, determining factor of Tibetanness. I will examine the articulations of Tibetanness in political (chapter 6) and cultural (chapter 7) spheres, argue for new ways of theorising these identities, and interrogate the constitutive role played by Western representations in these identity discourses. In chapter 6, I highlight various dynamics of political Tibetanness and foreground the crucial role played by the poetics of Exotica Tibet. In chapter 7, I offer new ways of theorising cultural facets of Tibetanness through an innovative postcolonial analysis of the symbolic geography of 'Dharamsala' (the seat of the Dalai Lama-led Tibetan government-in-exile). This retheorisation exemplifies ways in which postcoloniality can challenge conventional disciplinary endeavours and offer new ways of doing IR. In this sense, my endeavour is as much anti-disciplinary as it is inter-disciplinary. While looking at cultural and political identities separately, both chapters emphasise the intermeshing between both, thus highlighting the need for enculturing political analysis (cf. Hay 2002) and politicising cultural analysis.

The conclusion sums up the arguments made in the different chapters and underlines that postcolonial IR offers an effective means to appreciate the political and productive effect of Western representational practices, especially on non-Western people. The poetics and politics of Western representations are legitimate areas of enquiry for IR not only because these support particular foreign policy regimes (as highlighted by critical IR), but also because they have a productive effect on the identities of political actors. Postcolonial IR appreciates the importance of popular culture for our understanding of world politics. A social constructionist theory of representation inspired primarily, though not exclusively, by Michel Foucault's discursive approach along with Said's Orientalism critique allows us to consider the poetics and the politics of Western representational practices and contributes toward debates within IR that seek to deparochialise it. In the spirit enunciated by the first

collection of poststructuralist writings¹⁵ in IR, I write a thesis ‘that is theoretical (but not methodological), that is empirical (but not empiricist), that problematizes (but does not problem-solve) world politics’ (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989: xi).

¹⁵ Though there is significant disagreement over the use of terms such as ‘postmodernism’ or ‘poststructuralism’, in this thesis I use them interchangeably.

Chapter 2: Deparochialising IR: the case for a postcolonial IR theory

‘Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalisation of its own arbitrariness’ (Bourdieu 1977: 164).

Non-Western peoples, and sometimes even states, have been ridden roughshod over both literally and figuratively in IR. One such people are the Tibetans. It is surprising that even as several critical theories have challenged the dominant paradigms on ontological, epistemological and methodological grounds in the last two decades, geographical parochialism has continued relatively unabated. My contention is that a postcolonial critical attitude, *postcoloniality*, that draws significantly from postcolonialism (also called Postcolonial theory or Postcolonial Studies, PS) may rectify it. My later chapters do not always explicitly engage with postcolonial theory, but adopt postcoloniality. Similarly, IR, for me, is a wider intellectual endeavour that should deal with various facets of world politics. The focus in this chapter will be on introducing postcolonial theory and arguing that although conventional IR theory¹ and postcolonial theory are worlds apart, a contingent ground for conversation is afforded by the developments within IR since the so-called third debate. The rejection of positivism (see Ashley and Walker 1990; Campbell 1998a, 1998b; Campbell and Dillon 1993; DerDerian and Shapiro 1989; George 1989; Lapid 1989; Shapiro 1988; Sjolander and Cox 1994; Smith et al. 1996; Walker 1993) and a reengagement with culture within IR (see Chay 1990; Lapid and Kratochwil 1996; Shapiro and Alker 1996; Weldes et al. 1999) has opened up space for a postcolonial IR endeavour.

The case for *doing* IR theory informed by postcolonialism, or *postcolonial international relations*, has remained largely unexplored.² In this chapter, I argue that in the figurative thinking space cleared by the postpositivist challenges to conventional

¹ I should clarify here that when within conventional or mainstream IR, I mainly include variants of realism and liberalism. I recognise that some of my criticisms of this IR do not hold true for Marxism-inspired world system theory and/or the dependency school – the third strand in the ‘Inter-paradigm debate’ of the 1970s. However, their influence on mainstream IR should not be over-emphasised. Even though some Marxism-inspired IR theories share positivist epistemology with realism and liberalism, they are largely seen as an ‘alternative’ (see Kegley and Wittkopf 2001) to the mainstream.

² For exceptions see Chowdhry and Nair 2002; Darby 1997, 1998; Darby and Paolini 1995; Krishna 1993, 1999; Ling 2002; Paolini 1999; Ramakrishnan 1999.

IR, postcolonial international theory too has a role to play. The primary emphasis here is to adopt a postcolonial theoretical position within IR, engaging the discipline while at the same time challenging it. This engagement is partly an attempt to estrange the basics of IR, partly a call for dialogue and bridge-building with critical discourses of IR, partly a critical review of existing critical discourses in (or at the edge of) IR, partly a call for appropriating the discursive space of IR for the play of hitherto silenced and marginalised voices, and partly to *undo* IR. It is through an interaction with non-Western context, material and agents of knowledge, that the dominant 'Occidental' theories of interpretation can be challenged and redrawn (Spivak 1990: 8), and IR is no exception. This involves not only dealing with what has been spoken in IR, but more importantly with what has not been said. For as Rob Walker points out, power is often most persuasive and effective amidst the silences of received wisdom (1993: 13).

In this chapter, I first allude to the neglect and marginalisation of issues affecting the lives of people in the third world within IR³ and highlight IR's eurocentrism.⁴ I then situate my stance on postcolonial theory, highlighting some of its many features, and argue for a shift in the concerns of postcolonial theory away from its often-exclusive focus on dialogue between the third world and the West. In the third part, I examine the difference between conventional IR and PS as disciplinary/intellectual formations. In the fourth part, the existing literature covering postcolonialism and IR is introduced. Finally I look at the space cleared by the third debate into which a postcolonial IR approach can place itself.

2A. Third world issues and IR

³ What Karena Shaw argues about the neglect of indigenous people in IR holds true for my purpose too: 'we need to understand how the *active marginalisation* of indigenous peoples has been necessary for international relations to appear and function' (2002: 68; emphasis added).

⁴ Some argue that since IR as a discipline is closely linked with the rise of United States (US) as a 'superpower' and because of intellectual predisposition, political circumstances and institutional opportunities, it is mainly an 'American social science' (Hoffman 1977; see also Crawford and Jarvis 2000; Smith 2000). Hence a better term might be 'Americentrism'. However, eurocentrism's main feature has been the explaining away of parochialism (European Enlightenment thinking) as superior, progressive and hence universal. Americentrism does not challenge this. Instead, it reinforces the powerful myth that the West is the best.

‘Whoever studies contemporary international relations cannot but hear, behind the clash of interests and ideologies, a kind of permanent dialogue between Rousseau and Kant’ (Hoffman 1965: 86).

This quote, which reduces IR to a debate between two white, privileged, European males, neatly reflects the parochial character of IR. The project of deparochialising IR thus entails recognition of its eurocentrism and the poverty of IR when it comes to matters concerning the majority of the worlds’ people who live in areas formerly under direct or indirect colonial rule of Western European states. These people(s) and places have been variously named ‘the third world’, ‘the South’, ‘the East’,⁵ ‘the developing world’, and so on. I use the terms interchangeably. It is interesting to note how the non-West undergoes *worlding* in various Western discourses.⁶ Here I use *worlding*, in a Spivakian sense (see Spivak 1988, 1990, 1993) to denote the giving of a ‘proper name to a generalized margin’ (Spivak 1997: 199), to refer to the way colonised space is brought into the world, that is, made to exist as part of a world essentially constructed by eurocentrism.⁷ The self-image of the West is often implicated in and produced by the process of naming – for instance, posing the non-

⁵ This term formerly reserved for communist-ruled Eastern Europe and the USSR is often used interchangeably for the South since the end of communist regimes there. This goes back to an older distinction usually made in European thought between the West and the East. For an interesting analysis of the use of the ‘East’ as the Other in the European identity formation, see Neumann (1999).

⁶ For instance, in the discourse of ‘West-East’, the Easterners are seen as irrational, backward, and feminine as opposed to the rational, progressive, masculine Westerners (I shall discuss this further in next two chapters). The rhetoric of development which renders most of the world as ‘developing’ or ‘under-developed’ puts all the countries of the world in a hierarchical scale where the (post)industrialised Western states are most developed and at the pinnacle, while the rest are at various points on the scale. The rhetoric exhorts the ‘developing’ countries to ‘modernise’ and strive to reach the pinnacle, ignoring the historical and structural forces that have impoverished them.

⁷ The naturalisation of eurocentrism as common sense is endemic in IR, as in many other disciplines. The hold of eurocentrism on modern knowledges is pernicious. ‘History is assumed to be European history, everything else being reduced to what historian Hugh Trevor-Roper (in 1965!) patronizingly called the “unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe”’ (Shohat and Stam 1994: 1). As Dipesh Chakrabarty writes:

for generations now, philosophers and thinkers shaping the nature of social science have produced theories embracing the entirety of humanity; as we well know, these statements have been produced in relative, and sometimes absolute, ignorance of the majority of the humankind i.e., those living in non-Western cultures (1992: 3).

Eurocentrism is not only a characteristic of conventional disciplines, but often of critical thinking too, including feminism (see Mohanty 1988; Mohanty et al. 1991), poststructuralism (see Spivak 1988), Marxism (see Gandhi 1998: 23-30; Prakash 1990), and World system theory (see Frank and Gills 1993). See also Frank 1998. Within Western thought, as Stephen Chan puts it: ‘There being no critical theoretical or postmodern agenda for the Third World, nothing in thought or praxis that centralises the majority of the humanity, that escapes the elite vantage point of text and technology, there has been instead an array of fireworks that illuminate, briefly, a way’ (1993: 424).

West as 'developing' makes the West the 'developed' and hence superior. This does not mean that non-Westerners have only been victims, lacking any agency. In fact, often the non-Westerners have catachrestically⁸ appropriated the Western (politics of) naming.

A cursory look at the literature of IR shows that there are relatively few works on issues facing the third world. For instance, Roxanne Doty's survey of some leading journals for the period of 1945-1993 revealed only one article with the word 'race' in the title, four with the term 'minorities' and thirteen with the term 'ethnicity' (1993: 445). This shows that at the peak of decolonisation when the terms reflected important developments in the third world, IR's concerns lay elsewhere. In general, there is also a lack of third world sources and argumentation within IR. In 1985 Kal J. Holsti writes that hierarchy seems 'to be a hallmark of international politics and theory' and since the domination of the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) is overwhelming, IR is 'a British-American intellectual condominium' (1985: 102-3).⁹ Fifteen years on, Barry Buzan and Richard Little point out, 'there is no doubt that IR has been studied from a very Eurocentric perspective with a concomitant failure to come to terms with how non-European "others" understood international relations or organized their world' (2000: 21).

This would not be a problem had IR recognised its own parochial character and not claimed to have universal applicability.¹⁰ *International Studies Quarterly*, one of the most prestigious journals in the field of IR claims to publish 'the best work being done in the variety of intellectual traditions included under the rubric of international studies' (2002), and yet articles challenging the mainstream and addressing the concerns of third world peoples are rare. Mainstream IR theories are Western, not

⁸ Where catachresis is the application of a term to a thing that it does not properly denote. This is often used in the sense of a tactical appropriation.

⁹ Often disciplinary developments in continental Europe are ignored. Knud Erik Jorgensen (2000), while discussing continental IR theory, points out that common attitude about it can be characterised as either *NST-doctrine* (there is 'No Such Thing') or *CCF-doctrine* (they are Clones, Copies or Franchise of Anglo-American endeavour).

¹⁰ Samir Amin rightly argues that though eurocentrism is anti-universalist, 'it does present itself as universalist, for it claims that imitation of the Western model by all peoples is the only solution to the challenges of our time' (1988: vii).

international, in terms of their origin, inspiration, priorities, and political biases.¹¹

Mainstream IR, especially neorealism

derives from one branch of Western political philosophy rooted in the experiences and perspectives of one group of people who happen to be white, propertied, and male. Nevertheless, it claims to apply across all time and space, eradicating in the process any [conscious] mediation of world politics by race, gender, class, or other kinds of historical/cultural difference (Ling 2002: 16).

Even when various ‘global’ voices and dialogue are sought to be promoted (as in James Rosenau 1993), the third world is either ignored¹² or spoken for by some Westerner,¹³ revealing the will to universalise within IR’s parochial thinking. When IR scholars speak of the Cold War as a period of ‘long peace’ (Gaddis 1987) and give reasons for ‘why we will soon miss the cold war’ (Mearsheimer 1990), they completely ignore that ‘[f]or the overwhelming majority of the world’s peoples, global politics since World War II has been anything but peaceful’ (Klein 1994: 15). My argument is not simply about ‘adding-on’ non-Western concerns to come up with a universal theory. Rather, it is to challenge IR’s supposed universalism and emphasise the need to be aware of one’s own ethnocentrism.

¹¹ Not surprising then that Chris Brown et al. (2002) in *International relations in political thought* focus exclusively on Western canon. The excuse they offer is weak and symptomatic of IR in general. For instance, they argue that the relevant criteria for canon can change on the basis of ‘current fashions’ (such as the current criticism that canon usually consists of white male Europeans), but this should not deny the ‘fact’ that some ‘thinkers clearly have produced more significant work than others’ (3) (not surprisingly, these are same as the canonical thinkers). This seems to be a dismissive gesture of relegating those who challenge eurocentrism and misogyny of Western canon as ‘current fashion’.

Brown et al. Go on to argue that the ‘modern global international order developed out of the European states-system, which emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth century CE from the wreckage of the medieval order which was constructed on the ruins of the Roman empire, in turn the product of the Roman republic and the inheritor of the thought of classical Greece’ (14). This buys into the dominant autobiography of modern Western thinking. It misses the crucial constitutive role of the ‘Rest of the world’ in the change from medieval to modern period. Ironically, the editors stop at the gate of classical Greeks – once again, ignoring the question of where did the Greeks come from? In such stories, classical Greeks seem to have descended from ‘heaven’, without ‘impure’ influences of nearby cultures, especially the Egyptians (cf. Bernal 1987, 1991). My argument is not against compilation of writings of Western political thinkers, but passing it off as global/international thought.

¹² The justification Rosenau provides for ignoring ‘Third world analysts’ is ‘space limitations’. Ironically, this does not lead him to title the book as *Western voices* instead of *Global voices*. On the other hand, Ole Waever (1998) is conscious of his non-investigation of non-Western cases and does not conflate ‘American and European developments in international relations’ with wider global developments.

¹³ In Rosenau (1993), Christine Sylvester includes not only a ‘Western feminist (Westfem)’, but also ventriloquises for ‘Her Third World Alter Ego/Identity (Tsitsi)’.

Even when IR scholars write about the third world in ‘prestigious’ IR journals, they usually do so from the vantage point of the West. West (particularly the US)¹⁴ and its security concerns seem to dominate the IR literature. Various powerful countries see the non-West mainly as a playground for their ‘power politics’. The realist paradigm is entrenched within works dealing with the third world and the ‘[c]onventional IR with its focus on great power politics and security, read narrowly, naturalizes ... global hierarchies and thus reproduces the status quo’ (Chowdhry and Nair 2002: 1). IR has, in general, not encouraged an intimate knowledge of non-Western countries. Issues central to the lives of common people in the third world have been largely marginalised and silenced in IR. ‘As a result, the representations of “international reality” and “international existence” have remained grounded in Western institutional and discursive practices so as to reflect and affirm parochial structures of power, interest, and identity’ (Grovoqui 2002: 33).

Discourses like those of development and globalisation that have made inroads into International Political Economy (IPE), a corollary of IR, do examine the third world. But these too look from a Western vantage point. In contrast, as we shall see in the following sections, postcolonial theory claims to speak from the margins.¹⁵ Unlike development (see Escobar 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; Sachs 1992) and globalisation (see Slater 1994, 1998) discourses that largely adopt an uncritical attitude towards modernity, postcolonialism can be interpreted as a third worldist discourse about modernity critically received (Paolini 1999: 7). In contradistinction to IR’s unquestioned acceptance of modernity, postcolonialism seeks to combine participation in a progressive agential politics of identity with a metacritique of modernism for its parochial ideas and exclusionary practices disguised as universalism. The primary focus in PS is on issues affecting people living in the third world as well as minorities living in the West. Before going into the distinctness and distinctiveness of postcolonialism vis-à-vis IR, a few introductory observations on the postcolonial enterprise are necessary.

2B. The postcolonial enterprise

¹⁴ As David Gibbs argues, the mainstream IR journals, especially in the US, ‘overwhelmingly publish on themes that flatter the US foreign policy establishment, while they omit facts that the establishment finds distasteful (2001: 424).

¹⁵ This does not mean that postcolonialists do not recognise the problems of ‘speaking for’ the unprivileged (Spivak 1988; for a different perspective see Loomba 1998: 231-45).

Though there is a significant debate over the definition of the term ‘postcolonial’, in a general sense it is used to refer to the critical study of the interactions between Western nations and the societies they had colonised in the modern period. Postcolonial theory is an area of literary and cultural study that has come into being as a part of the decentring tendency of post-1960s thought in the West with the explicit aim of challenging Western thought as progressive and superior. An important landmark was the publication of Edward Said’s influential critique of Western constructions of the Orient in his *Orientalism* (1978). Initially, the favoured terminologies were ‘world literatures in english’, ‘new literatures’, and in the sphere of theory, ‘colonial discourse’. The term ‘postcolonial’¹⁶ gained currency in the academia after the publication of *Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft et al. 1989), which was followed by a number of encyclopaedias and readers on postcolonial literature and studies (Ashcroft et al. 1995; Barker et al. 1994; Mongia 1996; Thieme 1996; Williams and Chrisman 1993; Williams and Childs 1997). Although the academic recognition of postcolonialism is a recent phenomenon, its subject matter has a longer ancestry going back to the oppositional writings during the period of formal colonialism. Under the rubric of PS, following Bart Moore-Gilbert (1997, and Moore-Gilbert et al. 1997), we may include colonial discourse analysis, postcolonial theory, postcolonial criticisms, and postcolonial literatures. Often postcolonial theory is used as a generic label for all these and I will follow this practice. PS is a fluid discipline with little agreement among either exponents or critics over its subject matter, its temporal and spatial dimensions, the meaning, and even the spelling of the main term. It is somewhat *anti-disciplinary*, at most an ‘episteme-in-formation’ (Hall 1996). Though it remains undisciplined, marked mostly by textual and political radicalism, it is not devoid of problems.

The ‘postcolonial’ is often seen as a temporal marker demarcating the colonial era from the period of formal political independence. However, this conception of postcolonial is problematic and lacks a critical edge since it focuses solely on

¹⁶ People differ in the ways they use the term. Some use hyphenated forms, while others don’t. Some writers make clear distinction between the hyphenated and un-hyphenated forms of the term (Mishra and Hodge 1993). My preference is to distinguish between ‘post-colonial’ as a temporal marker (the period after formal decolonisation) and ‘postcolonial’ as the analytic concept of greater range and ambition which questions the totalising gestures implied in the project of colonialism and modernity.

acquisition of 'formal' sovereignty, often ignoring economic, cultural and even political structural dependence. The term, with its prefix 'post', may carry with it the implication that colonialism is a matter of past, undermining colonialism's economic, political, and cultural traces in present international political and economic life (see Shohat 1992). The former metropolis (the imperial states) have become the first world, better known as the developed world, while the former colonies have become the third world, the developing world. The theatre of neo-colonialist international relations as well as the evolving world economy is a stark reminder to the formally independent peoples/states about their place under the sun – in the corners, at the margins. The structure of UN Security Council, except for the presence of China (though ironically in a certain sense it vindicates its presence by having its own colony in the form of Tibet), reflects how little has changed since pre-second world war times.¹⁷ But as Stuart Hall as points out,

'After' means in the moment which follows that moment (the colonial) in which the colonial relation was dominant. It does not mean...that what we have called the 'after-effects' of colonial rule have somehow been suspended. It certainly does *not* mean that we have passed from a regime of power-knowledge into some powerless and conflict-free time zone (1996a: 254).

Given that the focus of postcolonialism is predominantly on West—non-West relations, where does Tibet fit in? It was never a European colony, though it was for some time under British influence. Ironically, it was 'colonised' by post-colonial China at a time when the rest of the world was witnessing sweeping movements for political decolonisation. Tibet complicates the picture and warns against any naïve assumptions about postcolonialism.¹⁸ However, if we take the postcolonial as indicative of a different approach to studying knowledge formations, things change dramatically. And this is the manner in which the emerging discipline of the PS adopts the term postcolonialism and I do the same with my use of postcoloniality (a postcolonial critical attitude). Rather than debating whether Tibet is a 'post-colonial' entity or not, the attention shifts to analysing the Tibet question from a postcolonial theoretical perspective.

¹⁷ Brysk et al. (2002) argue that the policies of former colonial powers toward their former colonies, often under the euphemism of 'special relationships', is marked by continuity and inequality.

¹⁸ As Tsering Shakya points out, 'Tibet has remained outside the scrutiny of postcolonialist discourse', while in Tibetan studies, 'questions drawn from critical studies on the postcolonial discourse have never been raised' (2001: 183).

Taking the lead from Jean-Francois Lyotard when he discusses the relation of postmodern to the modern – ‘I have said and will say again that ‘post-modernism’ signifies not the end of modernism, but another relation to modernism’ (in Van Reijen and Veerman 1988) – one may accept that postcolonial is not something that is merely after the colonial; rather, it must be formulated such that there is a necessary exposure of the prevalent power relations. I use ‘postcolonial’ to signify a position against imperialism and eurocentrism. ‘A postcolonial approach...foregrounds the erasures surrounding race and representation, resistance and agency’ (Chowdhry and Nair 2002: 10). Western ways of knowledge production and dissemination in the past and present then become objects of study for those seeking alternative means of expression. Postcolonialism does not signal a closing off of that which it contains (colonialism), or even a rejection (which would not be possible in any case), but rather an opening of a field of inquiry and understanding following a period of relative closure. It is a distinctive form of theorisation and analysis whose central defining theme is the ‘investigation of the mutually constitutive role played by colonizer and colonized, centre and periphery, the metropolitan and the “native”, in forming, in part, the identities of both the dominant power and the subalterns involved in the imperial and colonial projects of the West’ (Rattansi 1997: 481), while recognising the context of fundamental asymmetry of power. Postcolonial theory emerged to challenge the knowledge production in the West about non-Western peoples. It entails responding to the influential ‘master’ discourses of the West such as history, philosophy and linguistics (see Ashcroft et al. 1989, 1995) that have sought to universalise European thinking as progress. It involves engaging with issues and experiences that have influenced significantly the lives of peoples in the third world. These experiences are of various kinds: migration, slavery, impoverishment, resistance, representation, identity, difference, gender, sexuality, place, race, violence, and so on. As Deepika Bahri (1996) points out

Despite the reservations and debates, research in Postcolonial Studies is growing because postcolonial critique allows for a wide-ranging investigation into power relations in various contexts. The formation of empire, the impact of colonization on postcolonial history, economy, science, and culture, the cultural productions of colonized societies, feminism and postcolonialism, agency for marginalized people, and the state of the postcolony in contemporary economic and cultural contexts are some broad topics in the field.

The focus within PS is on micropolitical concerns, on the politics of everyday life, as it is here that the real effects of knowledge regimes are felt. While postcolonialism

foregoes the idea of some grand emancipation, it remains an empowering discourse for gendered and racialised subjectivities, hitherto marginalised by the dominant discourses. The postcolonialist attitude towards the modern state as an institution ranges from hope for appropriation for critical purposes to ignorance, from ambiguity to outright hostility (for a range of views, see Chatterjee 1993; Memmi 1968; Parry 1987; Said 1989). Universal ideas such as nationalism, and their unproblematic implementation globally are eschewed. As Partha Chatterjee argues, 'the universality – the sovereign, tyrannical universality – of Reason remains unscathed. Nationalist thought has not emerged as the antagonist of universal Reason in the arena of world history' (1986: 168).¹⁹ Thus, postcolonial theory seeks to go beyond formal political decolonisation to a decolonisation of mind, decolonisation of discourses through which the world is categorised.

However, such a retheorisation of politics does not necessarily imply the jettisoning of macropolitical questions. Though the specificity of 'big' political questions is negotiated and resisted at an individual and local level, they often have a containing and constraining influence. One such macropolitical question is related to the issue of self-determination. While scepticism of nation and state building projects is understandable,²⁰ it cannot be denied that there are many groups who seek to define their collective identity in terms of nation and collective aspirations in terms of state. For the Indian diaspora it might be comfortable to talk about the failings of their nation-state, but for the Tibetan diaspora, it is a luxury they can hardly afford. The *inter-national* character of world politics circumscribes means of collective political self-expression.

Postcolonial works often focus on, and question, the ways in which the West continues to spin a web of knowledge-power regimes about the non-Western world. Postcolonial theory contributes substantially to our understanding, especially on themes such as imperialism, representation, identity, diaspora, and resistance. But not much when it comes to nationalism,²¹ sovereignty, self-determination, and domination by post-

¹⁹ In the context of women writing in India, Susie Tharu and K. Lalita write that 'the interests of empire and of nation are not always in contradiction' (1991: 11). In fact imperialism and nationalism shared assumptions about issues of gender, class and sexuality.

²⁰ Gyan Prakash (1990) takes to task nationalist, Marxist and Orientalist historiography for furthering the project of an universalist modernity and engendering certain erasures.

²¹ Here, we find earlier anti-colonial thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi, Frantz Fanon, Albert

colonial states (largely because of its scepticism of macropolitical ideas). While it is true that it is the application of Western ideas that has allowed powerful states to assert their dominance regionally, it is not enough to leave the analysis at this point. Interrogations of Western ideas have to be accompanied by particular dynamics of power exercised by regional hegemonies (like China in Tibet, India in Kashmir and Indonesia in East Timor). While the postcolonialists have contributed substantially by studying resistance to state building projects from the perspectives of gender and indigeneity, there is also a need to take into account resistance coming from those identifying themselves as distinct nations, or as distinct ethnic groups. The discrediting of nationalism as a liberating ideology does not mean that all those who mobilise themselves in the name of nationalism now are operating under some sort of 'false consciousness', for often it is done strategically. For instance, Tibetans adopt different vocabularies keeping in mind the audience, ranging from the rhetoric of human rights to the right of self-determination, from autonomy to secession. Postcolonial theory needs to take such issues into account to be more meaningful to many people living within the third world. As David Scott has argued, the thrust of the argument now should be to move away from postcoloniality's politics of theory to a new theory of politics where 'the accent is on *political* rather than cultural criticism' (1999: 19; emphasis in original).

Postcolonialism necessitates an interrogation of historical, geopolitical, and cultural contextualisation at the outset of any enquiry. More generically, we may use the term 'postcolonial' to lay bare the complicity of knowledge production concerning the cultural Others and representational regimes within the dominant power structures. This entails a shift in focus from dialogue with the metropolitan to transnational dialogue with other third world discourses too (Williams and Chrisman 1993: 16-7). For knowledge about Tibet is not only produced in the West, but also in China, India and Nepal. Tibetans thus have to negotiate their identity discourses at different levels, depending upon the kind of representational regime in which they are operating.²²

Memmi, and others, more helpful. Often, they sought to separate nation from state and deploy it in service of other, more inclusive, forms of political community (Gandhi 1998: 121).

²² An important point of clarification here. My focus in the thesis is predominantly on West-Tibet interaction and thus I reproduce postcolonial theory's emphasis on West-nonWest relations at the expense of nonWest-nonWest relations for which I criticise it here. A detailed treatment of Chinese, Indian, and other discourses about Tibet is excluded here for economy of space. Given my criticism of Rosenau (1993) for this (see footnote 12), my own justification may sound ironic. But where I differ is in not conflating Western representations with global

Differences within the postcolonial enterprise allow the field to be construed as a site for voices of dissent, voices of criticality. Western ways of knowledge production and dissemination in the past and present then become objects of study for those seeking an alternative means of expression. The enterprise of IR theory is one such Western knowledge formation that should be put under erasure from a postcolonial perspective. Since critical theories going under the name of feminism, poststructuralism and constructivism have already challenged the dominance of conventional IR theories, a postcolonial IR becomes a real possibility. This possibility itself shows how far IR has changed in the last two decades since the disciplinary/intellectual histories of IR and PS have been very distinct.

2C. IR and PS: divided skies, divided horizons?

A brief comparison of IR, an established *discipline-in-crisis* and PS, an *anti-discipline* gives us an idea of how these two diverge. Here I begin with mainstream IR theory,²³ especially its realist and liberal strands, before moving onto critical IR in the next section. IR emerged as a discipline in its own right in the Anglo-American world at a time when the authority of Western imperialism was more or less secure.²⁴ The proponents concerned themselves with the ‘big’ issues of war and peace that affected the relations between ‘civilised’ nation-states. The name ‘international relations’ was somewhat a misnomer, as from the very beginning, the main unit of analysis in international theory was the state. Theoretical antecedents were traced to thinkers and statesmen of the Western world. While Thucydides’ and Machiavelli’s works were being invented as antecedents of Realism, works from non-Western history such as Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* (a treatise on statecraft written, allegedly, by a Pundit in ancient India) were ignored. Due to their focus on narrowly-defined big questions, the debate between idealists and realists conveniently ignored the issues that were central to the everyday lives of people of the colonising countries as an ‘internal’ matter and

representations and using terms such as ‘global’ when I concentrate mainly on the Western.

²³ Though within IR theory significant debates have taken place, including the third debate between ‘rationalism’ and ‘reflectivism’, as Steve Smith points out, the wider discipline of IR ‘is far more realist, far more state-centric and far more unquestioning of the dominance of realism and positivism that is the case within IR theory’ (2000: 379).

²⁴ Although the story of IR as a distinct discipline usually starts with the formation of the first department of the discipline at Aberystwyth in 1919, Brian Schmidt (1998) has argued that the subject of IR was studied even before the First World War.

by the very same logic refused to see any link between the international system and colonised places. Exclusive concentration on state-as-actor meant no attention was given to the people under colonial rule. The imperial powers ensured that their relationships with their colonies remained an internal matter (Darby and Paolini 1994: 384), outside the purview of IR. The distinction between international relations and imperial relations was identified and asserted.

IR remained confined to theorising how *statesmen* conduct relationships among 'civilised' states. Denial of Wilsonian principle of self-determination to places outside Europe after the First World War illustrated the double standards of Western powers. They conferred the badge of civilisation only on the European countries, the United States, and later on Japan – revealing that the label was related more to the political influence of the state than anything else. Given the close links between the emerging IR discipline and foreign policy making bodies of government, it would not be wrong to state that IR as a knowledge formation was complicit with existing power structures from its inception. The close linkage between IR and policy making authorities continues today, especially in the United States (see Hoffman 1977; Smith 2000). This close association with decision making process coupled with the theoretical underpinnings of positivism, empiricism and the search for 'objectivity' ensured IR's status as a status quoist discourse par excellence.

This inherent conservativeness of IR ensured that even with formal decolonisation after the Second World War there was no major shake-up in the theoretical underpinnings of the discipline. Significantly, when decolonisation was at its peak in the 1960s and the third world was asserting itself through the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), IR was self-referentially engaged in its own debate over methodological issues – the 'second debate' between traditionalism and behaviourism. Even now 'there were no sustained attempts to explore the workings of nineteenth-century imperialism, which might have led to a rethinking of the international politics of the third world or to a recognition of the significance of cultural factors in world politics' (Darby and Paolini 1994: 379-80). Any serious analysis of imperialism was eschewed as it breached the neat and artificial distinction between the external and the internal – something central to the IR enterprise (see Walker 1993). The concepts remained unchanged. They remained rooted in 'Western notions of self and sovereignty [that] have been grounded in claims of superiority, a higher knowledge of civil institutions,

and a mission to elevate the other' (Grovoqui 1996: x). Ontologically, decolonisation was looked upon merely as an expansion of international system/society from its original home in Europe to the rest of the world, as the addition of new members into the international community. Epistemologically too, there was little change as scientific and positivistic assumptions were held to have universal application. State-as-actor remained the focus of analysis; sovereignty, power, national interest and state rivalry was seen to define international relations. While at a theoretical level all states were considered to be sovereign and thus legally equal, the hierarchical character of this relationship was often implicitly recognised²⁵ as most of the works in IR concentrated on East-West relations and the Cold War. Though at a pedagogical level IR acquired a global audience, its theoretical parsimony continued unabated.

The newly independent states, now worlded as the 'third world' or 'developing countries' were the subject of analyses in IR primarily in two ways. First, as a playground for the rivalry of the superpowers as in Afghanistan. Second, when they defied the logical authority of the powerful states (and also the theoretical authority of IR by acting 'irrationally') as was the case with Iran (see Chan and Williams 1994).²⁶ What went earlier under the name of imperial relations now became a subject matter for imperial history. Instead of studying developments in the third world in the wider historical context of a long period of brutal colonisation and a structurally truncated form of decolonisation, imperialism was seen as a thing of the past. This general neglect of history (or often an adoption of a reified view of history) should not come as a surprise for IR always had tendencies towards taking ahistoricised positions.²⁷

²⁵ At an institutional level, the unequal relations are exemplified in almost every international body. One of the best examples, of course, is the UN Security Council and its five permanent members with veto powers. Siba Grovoqui highlights two paradoxes of decolonisation. First, only the rights sanctioned by the former colonialists were accorded to the colonised, regardless of the needs and demands of the latter. Second, 'the rules and procedures of decolonization were determined and controlled by the former colonial powers to effect specific outcomes' (1996: 6)

²⁶ Some writers put the blame of US interventions in third world on third world itself. For instance, Robert Snyder (1999), in his analysis of US relations with Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, and Zimbabwe, argues that it is their provocation that leads to a US reaction. It reflects the phenomenon of blaming the victims and absolving the victimiser (for interesting views on this phenomenon as witnessed in the case of Palestinian question, see Said and Hitchen 1988). Ironically, Snyder justifies this by saying 'the time has come to give agency to Third World states in understanding their foreign policies' (2001: 436). He ignores that the subalterns do not need his paternalism to acquire agency; at best he can recognise the agency that they already possess.

²⁷ Buzan and Little (2001) rightly point out that IR has failed as an intellectual project due to its insulation from other social sciences and *history*.

Regarding present day concerns of the non-Western world, third worldist discursive approaches such as development and modernisation do influence International Political Economy, a field closely intertwined with IR. However, these approaches too, like IR, take a top-down view. For instance, the important issue of poverty is sanitised as a structural problem requiring medicines prescribed by the West-dominated financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. Within realist and liberal IR that accounts for a bulk of the discipline, there is hardly any recognition or analysis of the legacies of colonialism and neocolonialism. The absence of any consideration, be it crude or sophisticated, of neocolonialism in mainstream IR is conspicuous.

Also conspicuous is the lack of any serious effort to deal with themes such as culture, identity, and representation. Mainstream IR has ignored that world politics is a product of wider processes of identity construction in which the Self and the Other are constituted.²⁸ Phillip Darby points out that the story of IR '[tells] of how power was exercised, not of how it was experienced' (1997: 23). This has led to a depersonalising and dehumanising of the discipline. Wars are studied in terms of strategy and rarely in terms of human consequences.²⁹ Western commentators and leaders speak, in a somewhat celebratory tone, of the changing character of war since the Gulf War with the use of new weaponry like 'smart bombs'. Mistakes are blamed on 'errant bombs' absolving the people dropping it from any moral responsibility. There are fewer works dealing with the human and environmental impact of the so-called 'clean' wars on the people at the receiving end (for the human impact of modern wars, see *Hidden wars* 2000).

Mainstream IR's theoretical and empirical closure and lack of self-reflexivity stands in a stark contrast to PS, which remains largely undisciplined. While drawing theoretical inspirations from critical thinkers of both Western and non-Western traditions, the proponents derive their political inspirations from anti-(neo)colonial narratives. A conscious oppositional stance is adopted vis-à-vis dominant discursive systems in

²⁸ Identity presumes an Other and is constituted through differences with this Other. Any identity, be it individual or collective, is always 'established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being' (Connolly 1991: 64).

²⁹ Darby points out how *reading* imaginative literature might act as corrective to this tendency of IR (1998).

place. A deliberate counter-discursive approach is taken to tackle hegemonic knowledge formations. Thus, a reflexive criticality is the hallmark of postcoloniality. Imperialism and its impact on peoples and cultures is given a due importance (see Bhabha 1994; Chaturvedi 2000; Chrisman 1990; McClintock 1995; Richards 1993; Sharpe 1992; Suleri 1992). While problematising categories such as third world, the voices of third world peoples are promoted, their agency and subjectivity asserted (see Spivak 1988; see also Mohanty et al. 1991). Contemporary problems are historicised, while at the same time even 'history' as it has come to be commonly understood is put under interrogation (see Chakravarty 2000; Guha and Spivak 1988; Prakash 1995b). Diversity of theoretical input ³⁰ gels with a wide range of issues brought under the label 'postcolonial'. PS is certainly multi/trans/interdisciplinary. In fact, it is anti-disciplinary.

As pointed out earlier, rather than being confined to 'big' issues, PS concentrates on the politics of everyday life. Universal ideas and their unproblematic implementation globally are eschewed. While acknowledging the relationship of complicity between the production of explanations and the violence and injustices associated with the structures of imperialism and capitalism, a deconstructive scenario of the kind emphasised by postcolonial theorists like Gayatri Spivak involves paying attention to critics' complicity with the object of critique, a 'disclosure of complicity' (1988: 180). Elsewhere, Spivak suggests two methods to confront the situation – overtly marking one's positionality as an investigating subject and laying bare one's inescapable institutional interests (1993: 56). This kind of self-reflexivity is absent from mainstream IR.

Darby surmises that the contrast between the mobile and variegated nature of the postcolonial discourse and the conservative character of mainstream IR reflects a general situation, which exists between established disciplines and the new formations of knowledge (1997: 13). I find this contentious. While there is little doubt that new disciplines informed by feminism, cultural and postcolonial theories are more radical,

³⁰ One interesting divide within the discipline is between those who draw upon poststructuralist thought, represented by the 'holy trinity' of postcolonial theory – Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak – (Moore-Gilbert 1997) and those who consider poststructuralism to be a retrogressive move that ignores the material deprivation of the peoples in the third world (see Ahmad 1994; Dirlik 1996; Goss 1996; Parry 1996; Shohat 1992). For a range of view on the relationship between postcolonialism and poststructuralism, see Adam

the surmise seems to suggest that it is only a matter of time before the disciplinary establishment would blunt their critical edge. As a corollary, one may also take the implication that when IR was a new formation of knowledge it was radical. Certainly this does not seem to be the case.

A basic difference exists between the established knowledges and some of the new ones, a difference that cannot be accounted for by temporal factors only. It is not a question of academic incorporation or assimilation, but of metatheoretical differences. Self-reflexivity regarding theoretical stances and empirical agendas was not a prominent feature of older disciplines even when they were new.³¹ Nor did they ever seek to place themselves in a position critical of the established authorities. Claims were generally not made on behalf of the unprivileged. Justification for disciplinary endeavours was given in the name of methodological correctness. Right from its inception, IR has, on the whole, been a status quoist discipline. On the other hand, many new hybridised disciplines have adopted critical and oppositional stance vis-à-vis the established discursive and material structures. Not only do they involve a critiquing of the existing norms and structures, but they also promote a constant questioning of their own shifting positionalities. While the older disciplines like IR were informed by a heady confidence in the Enlightenment ideas of Progress, Reason and Emancipation, the new knowledge formations' attitude to these ideas vary from scepticism to outright rejection. The latter argue that the Enlightenment ideas have sought to universalise particularistic, ethnocentric, and masculinist notions. Unlike older disciplines, which emerged to carve out an exclusive niche for themselves, the new ones seek to challenge disciplinary compartmentalisation, circumvent it, and are often anti-disciplinary. While IR emerged as a corollary to the study of politics, PS's emergence within humanities and social sciences has come as a challenge to various disciplinary boundaries. Its challenging nature offers opportunities for adoption of a postcolonial approach to world politics, in alliance with critical IR.

2D. The possibility for postcolonial IR theory

and Tiffin 1991.

³¹ This is not to deny that there were significant disagreements between various theories. For instance, the dominant autobiography of IR traces its beginning to the 'first debate' between 'idealism' and 'realism'. Idealism purported to challenge the existing system of international relations. But both these theories shared significant epistemological and ontological assumptions.

Given the potential critical edge in the discourse of postcolonialism, it is surprising that even the more radical endeavours in the field of IR have generally ignored it.³² For instance, in the pioneering postmodern work – *International/Intertextual Relations* (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989) – the long bibliography does not include works that move beyond the confines of the ‘West’. Even when the term postcolonialism is used in IR, for instance in Christopher Clapham’s work on Africa and the international system (1996), it is devoid of postcoloniality (that is, a postcolonial criticality) and is used in the simplistic periodising sense of post-colonial times. ‘[E]ven works embarking from professedly critical postmodern and poststructural perspectives often replicate the Eurocentric ecumene of “world politics”’ (Krishna 1999: xxix).

Why this lack of engagement of critical international theories with a potential ally (postcolonial theory)? Sankaran Krishna brought attention to this as early as 1993 when he highlighted the fact that some postmodern theorists commence from a remarkably self-contained and self-referential view of the West and are often oblivious to ‘the intimate dialogue between “Western” and “non-Western” economies, societies, and philosophies that underwrite the disenchantment with modernity that characterizes the present epoch’ (Krishna 1993: 388). ‘[T]he story of “how the west was one” (Klein 1994) has always been inextricable from the story of how the rest were rendered both multiple and voiceless’ (Krishna 1999: xxi) – this has often been neglected by critical interventions in IR debates. Cautioning against a blanket critique of subjectivity and agency,³³ which he alleges to be a feature of some postmodernist works, Krishna prefers a postcolonial perspective that entails sensitivity to hierarchical relations between races, genders, and classes while also challenging the ethnocentricity of IR. He defines what he calls a ‘politics of postcolonial engagement’ as

the simultaneous task of deconstructing, historicizing, and denaturalizing identities (national, ethnic, linguistic, religious), *as well as* envisioning and struggling for a future that does not seek to transcend or escape identity politics so much as fight for justice and fairness in the worlds we do inhabit. A critical and engaged approach to international relations is indispensable in such a struggle that is simultaneously

³² The feminist writings are an exception to this as challenge to geographical parochialism is taken seriously here. For instance, see Jabri and O’Gorman 1999.

³³ This criticism reflects concerns raised in wider debates over the ‘political’ value of postmodernism/poststructuralism. Though poststructuralist writings often foreground counterscripts to ‘identities scripted by dominant statist institutions’ (Shapiro 1996: 259; see also Doty 2001), they are accused of a relative ‘evisceration of agency, class, power and political economy ... a neglect of intentionality and agency brought about by the retreat from “material” causes’ (O’ Tuathail 1996a: 651).

deconstructive and oriented toward the achievement of specific political goals and visions (*Ibid.*: xviii; emphasis in original).

While I agree that the critical insurgencies in general and postmodern/poststructuralist writing in particular have tended to ignore the concerns of the non-West, I do not accept Krishna's caricature of postmodern writings in IR as depoliticising. For not only do these endeavours create space for imagining alternatives (a fact Krishna recognises), but they also accept the need to formulate ironic, provisional, and yet politically enabling essentialising of subjectivity (something which Krishna accuses them of ignoring). What critical theories like critical social constructivism, feminism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism have exposed is 'International Relations as a discursive process: a process by which identities are formed, meaning is given, and status and privilege are accorded; a process by which threats to identity and its meaning are both disciplined and punished; a process of knowledge *as* power' (George 1996: 69-70; emphasis in original).

On the other hand, Darby proceeds to criticise not only postmodernism's lack of interest in the non-West, but also the postmodernist incursions in postcolonial theory for he believes them to have had a depersonalising and decontextualising influence. He claims that both postmodern and conventional IR share a sense of remoteness from the phenomena under analysis, both look on at an essentially de-peopled landscape where ethics and intentions do not rate highly (admittedly from very different perspectives), and do not pursue consequences in human terms (Darby 1997: 15-17).

This comparison, I would argue, seems to be misplaced and does an injustice to politicising potentialities of postmodern IR.³⁴ He critiques 'strategic essentialism' for lacking a cutting edge and for inscribing the secondary status of the third world in the thinking of the first world. In contrast, he argues that we need to give much more weight to the problems of the third world, rather than continuing to tailor our approach

³⁴ That the accusation of postmodernism as politically disabling is incorrect can be seen in several postmodernist IR works. David Campbell, in his analysis of United States foreign policy, retheorises F(/f)oreign P(/p)olicy as one of the boundary producing practices central to the production and re-production of the identity in whose name it operates (States) (1998b). Walker offers a poststructuralist analysis of the inside/outside question and advocates a *politics of becoming* (rather than a politics of being) which challenges the modern framing of others as Other, reproduced and legitimised by the very distinction between International Relations and Political Theory (1993: 183). In a similar vein, William Connolly explores the politics of identity and the way in which it is linked with the politics of difference (1991).

to the issues in hand in line with the requirements of an often resistant body of theory (Darby 1997: 15-17). These arguments not only repeat the positivist fallacy of making a distinction between theory and practice but they also contrast material structures with discursive practices as if they do not perform a mutually constitutive role. Darby ignores the fact that the constitutive paradox of essentialism and anti-essentialism is irreducible. Spivakian *strategic essentialism* – ‘a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest’ (1996: 214) ³⁵ – still seems to be the best way forward for it enables while at the same time humbling (a characteristic noticeably absent from the often arrogant pronouncements of conventional IR).

If there is a strand of critical international theory that has taken on board postcolonial concerns most seriously, it is feminist IR. At a general level, feminists have made an immense contribution to IR through a reworking of the central concerns of the discipline in ways that encourage us to think about each of these areas in radically different ways (see Enloe 2000, Parpart and Zalewski 1998; Peterson and Runyan 1999; Steans 1998; Sylvester 2002; Tickner 1992). Feminist scholarship, for instance, has raised important questions about the processes of inclusion and exclusion involved in the construction of theory. At a more specific level, many feminist practitioners of IR have taken very seriously Chandra Mohanty’s (1988) accusation that Western feminist writings often suffer from an inherent methodological universalism and simplistic dichotomies, thereby colonising the heterogeneity of lives of women in third world to produce ‘third world women’ carrying the authorising signatures of Western humanist discourse. They now read discourses of gender, race, and sexuality as intertextual. For instance, Jane Parpart argues that the idea that IR is a ‘man’s affair’ presupposes a single, biologically based, largely *Anglo-American* vision of masculinity (1998: 203), while Jan Jindy Pettman (1996) points out that the sexual politics of colonialism and race politics of gender need also to be taken into account.³⁶

³⁵ Feminists have taken lead over others in their expositions on negotiating between essentialisms and anti-essentialisms. One recalls here Judith Butler’s ‘contingent foundations’ (1992), Kathy Ferguson’s ‘mobile subjectivities’ (1993), and Diane Fuss’ strategy of ‘deploying essentialism’ (1989).

³⁶ When it comes to nationalism, Kate Manzo (1996) has shown how race figures in the construction of nation, while Nira Yuval-Davis 1997 has drawn attention to its gendered base.

IR's third debate, of which feminist theories are a part, has seriously charged the discipline of status quoism and a lack of self-consciousness and reflexivity. Fresh ideas from the fields of social, political and cultural theories have inspired iconoclastic attacks on the historically identified and discursively constituted edifice of the discipline. The 'truths' of IR have been revealed as effects of regimes of truth, knowledge as complicit with power, pursuit of objectivity as a chimera, hitherto universal concepts as ethnocentric and particularistic. As we shall see in the next chapter, with respect to the questions of identity and representation, constructivist and discursive views have gained currency.

As the new century has begun, critical voices are becoming increasingly vocal. IR is divided over subject matter, methodology and the epistemological structure of theories and has joined the ranks of introspective academic disciplines. In an optimistic vein, Yosef Lapid claims that IR may now be seen as a divided discipline with multiple theoretical inlets (Lapid and Kratochwil 1996: 11). The sovereignty of the discipline has been compromised. However, one needs to be careful when examining the impact of these philosophical insurgencies on IR. These exciting developments within as well as at the margins of the discipline should not lead to any complacency on part of the challengers. The mainstream, though shaken, remains in place. While some have grasped the significance of these criticisms and have sought to redefine their agenda, others have taken a more rigid position. The best examples of the first trend would be the recently acquired vibrancy in the English school.³⁷ On the other hand, one comes across many advocates of a more narrowly defined, purist version of realism in IR (for instance, Legro and Moravcsik 1999). Liberals or pluralists scavenge for new ideas more adaptable to the mainstream, including that of liberal feminism.³⁸ Those who manage to resist incorporation remain on the margins, often setting their own agendas. Cynthia Weber (1999), for instance, makes a convincing case for not critiquing the traditional truths of IR while urging the challengers to carry on writing differently seductive accounts of international political concepts and activities.

³⁷ However, one should note that the proponents of the school had from the very beginning been sceptical of hard core realism and opted for 'Rationalism'. A discussion on critical possibilities in the English School/ International Society approach can be found, for instance, in Dunne 1998. For a reformulated, more historicised, (re)working of realism, see Buzan and Little 1993.

³⁸ For an example of this see Keohane 1991. For an effective critique of this, see Weber 1994.

As many feminist and poststructuralist writings have shown, all hope is not lost as far as appropriating IR for more critical purposes (or as Sylvester puts, homesteading³⁹ it) is concerned. 'International theory progresses when voices of authority are engaged by voices that go against the grain' (Der Derian 1995: 9). I personally prefer approaches that seek strategically to engage dominant discourses without losing their critical edge, something that has been at the heart of the postcolonial project. Such dilemmas have been basic to postcolonial identity where mimicry intermingles with counter-discourse, resistance with ambivalence. Challenging hegemony requires persistent critique, abrogation and appropriation, and bundling together several, often contradictory, strategies and tactics. One may do so by taking up the 'margin' as a favoured enunciatory position⁴⁰ and exile as an ado(/a)pted metaphorical position (see Ashley and Walker 1990a). Many postmodernists, feminists and postcolonial theoretical-practitioners have done so. It does not indicate acquiring a distant vantage point making objective observations more possible. Instead, a conscious acquisition of marginality in the sphere of ideas bares the arbitrariness of the sovereignty of discourses as well as that of discourses of sovereignty. As Peter Hansen writes, by emphasising the marginality of the subaltern rather than its 'irremediable subordination or inability to speak', postcolonialism and other 'borderlands' perspectives 'offer the possibility of exploring the dynamic power relations between subalterns and elites, without reinforcing the dichotomy between them' (2000: 310).⁴¹ Margins also act as 'contact zones' (see Pratt 1992) providing a conducive atmosphere for inter-/multi-/trans- disciplinary endeavours.

Let me then recapitulate some of the commonalities that can provide a contingent ground for conversations between existing critical international theories and postcolonialism in order to come up with a postcolonial IR that seeks to deparochialise the discipline of IR. Both endeavours seek to provide a critique of dominant discourses for being the typical products of Western modernity. They reveal the silences of the disciplines by exposing philosophical closures and the underlying power-knowledge nexus. Both are marked by constitutive paradoxes. Challenge to the

³⁹ Sylvester defines her strategy of homesteading as a process, relying on the principle of *empathetic cooperation*, 'that reconfigure (s) 'known' subject statuses ... in ways that open up rather than fence in terrains of meaning, identity and place' (1994: 2).

⁴⁰ One needs to make a distinction between such theoretical position and materially and discursively marginalised positions: the former is a strategic move, while the latter is imposed.

⁴¹ For a cautious reflection of 'marginality' as offering institutional validation and certification

sovereignty of subjectivity goes along with an assertion of subjectivity. Resurgence of identity accompanies the deconstruction of identification process as constructed and processual. The universalistic pretensions of the mainstream are revealed as particularistic and ethnocentric. Emphasis on the local and particular go hand in hand with attempts at more inclusive understandings. The strategy involved includes *rereading*⁴² and *rewriting* the canonical texts, as well as constructing an alternative and different archive.⁴³

IR should no longer be seen as the study of particular kinds of political relations only; it should also involve intercultural relations and intersubjective relations. A postcolonial international theory based on conversations of critical IR with anti-disciplinary intellectual endeavours like PS would make this possible. In contrast to an ‘economic model’ of interdisciplinary engagement, in which disciplines retain their sovereignty, this will follow the ‘model of interdisciplinarity as conversation, as dialogical, in which the disciplinary subject is at least potentially liable to be transformed through the encounter with the other’ (Weldes et al. 1999: 21-25; 24). How exactly such conversation take place would differ according to different themes and contexts. I do not provide a blueprint for such a dialogue; focusing instead on the themes of representation and identity, especially those involving the West-nonWest dynamics.

2E. Conclusion: a call for a new beginning

Once again it should be emphasised that an understanding of the ways in which non-Western Others were represented within the colonial and Oriental discourse helps in understanding contemporary world politics for the same processes often continue today. Though informal neocolonial structures have replaced formal structures of imperial domination, stereotypical⁴⁴ images of non-Western peoples continue to

within Western ‘academy’, see Spivak 1997.

⁴² Here one may point out Said’s method of *contrapuntal reading* which involves a way of reading texts (of literature) so as to reveal their deep implication in dominant systems (imperialism and colonial process). Examples are found in Said 1993.

⁴³ A good example of such multidisciplinary endeavour is Albert Paolini’s *Navigating modernity* (1999) that outlines a reflexive postmodern approach to international relations drawing upon the discourses of postcolonialism and globalisation with specific references to Africa.

⁴⁴ As I will discuss in chapter 4, stereotyping is a common representational strategy in

circulate, often buttressing the power relations already in place. The representations of the non-West in academic as well as popular Western discourses are still enmeshed in asymmetrical power relations. Before thinking of alternative representational regimes, the critical endeavours in IR need to reveal the way representational practices lie at the heart of international theory and praxis. The first step is to unpack the concept of representation.

situations of unequal access to resources. ‘Stereotyping reduces, essentialises, naturalises and fixes “difference”’ (Hall 1997b: 257-8). For an interesting discussion of similar representational such strategies, see chapter 5 and also Spurr 1993.

Chapter 3: The theme of representation in international, cultural, and postcolonial studies

‘Representations do not imitate reality but are practices through which things take on meaning and value; to the extent that a representation is regarded as realistic, it is because it is so familiar that it operates transparently’ (Shapiro 1988: xi).

Taking up the challenge of combating IR’s parochialism, in this section, I argue that a postcolonial IR approach, based on a dialogue between critical international theories and postcolonialism would look at Exotica Tibet as integral to the framing and operationalising of the Tibet question within world politics. In the first chapter of the section, after providing a general theoretical background for considering representation and identity, I look at the ways in which IR and postcolonialism studies Western representations of the non-Western world.¹

First, I offer a general discussion of representation that takes place in international studies, cultural and postcolonial theory. This is followed by a study of Orientalism. Drawing upon a critical appropriation of Edward Said’s (1978) Orientalism critique, Exotica Tibet is set up as an Orientalist construct with modes and discursive strategies generic to other sites of Western representations of the non-West. This sets up the stage for the next chapter where I discuss the general modes and strategies characterising these representational practices highlighting the particularities of Exotica Tibet.

Before proceeding further, it should be clarified that a concentration on Western representations does not deny the fact that representational practices are prevalent in non-Western societies too. In fact, historically, all cultures and civilisations have had their own particular representational practices for perceiving those they considered as Other.² But – and this is a crucial qualification – it was only with modern European

¹ A critical engagement with ‘Exotica Tibet and world politics’ presents its own problems in disciplinary terms. IR has not dealt with postcolonialism and the Tibet question; postcolonial studies has ignored IR as well as Tibet; and, although Tibetan studies has some encounter with postcolonial theory, it has had little contact with IR theory. So, in borrowing from IR, postcolonial theory, and Tibetan studies, I move beyond all three to set up a theoretical framework within which to understand the poetics and politics of Exotica Tibet. Not only does this framework entail recognising the cultural underpinnings of world politics, but it also politicises our understandings of culture.

² But there is a crucial difference in terms of implication and impact. Discussing the difference

imperialism that the capacity to convert these representations into *truth* on a systematic and mass scale emerged. Creation of an archive of knowledge about the Other has been integral to post-Enlightenment Europe and its imperial expansion abroad. This archive acts as a 'regime of truth' (in the sense used by Foucault, 1980: 133) with disciplinary effects, which that limits and channels perception in terms of fixed tropes. These tropes are not fixed *ahistorically* as their content and meanings are the products of historical specificity. However, they often remain stable for substantial periods of time. What makes such representational practices distinctly modern is their productive capacity. Production of knowledge about the Other goes hand in hand with the construction, articulation, and affirmation of differences between the Self and Other, which in turn feeds into the politics of identification.

Social and cultural identities by their very nature have always been discursively constructed. What is new and peculiar to modernity is the desire and ability to construct a bounded identity based on a fixed and autonomous idea of self. This has been paralleled by the power of representations to construct identity and by highly unequal access to discursive and representational resources at a global level. Representational practices feed the dominant knowledge regimes and structures and shape the very identities they seek to represent. The best known example of this is the ideational construct of Orientalism, which reflects the close connection between particular modes of cultural representations, anthropology, and European imperialism (see Said 1978). In the process it also creates the categories of 'Oriental' and 'Occidental' people.

Within international studies, it is important to look at Western cultural representations of non-Western people. This is so for two reasons. First, representations populate the

between representing whiteness in the black imagination and representing blackness in the white imagination, bell hooks argues that this asymmetry is highlighted in James Baldwin's experience (*Notes of a Native Son* 1955).

Writing about being the first black person to visit a Swiss village with only white inhabitants, who had yearly ritual of painting individuals black who were then positioned as slaves and bought, so that the villagers could celebrate their concern with converting the souls of the 'natives', Baldwin responded: '...[T]here is a great difference between being the first white man to be seen by Africans and being the first black man to be seen by whites. The white man takes the astonishment as tribute, for he arrives to conquer and to convert the natives, whose inferiority in relation to himself is not even to be questioned...[t]he astonishment with which I might have greeted them, should they have stumbled into my African village a few hundred years ago, might have rejoiced their hearts. But the astonishment with which they greet me

world with specific subject positions within which concretised individuals are then interpellated (see Weldes 1999). Identity claims of various non-Western communities thus operate within power relations put in place by the West. This does not deny non-Westerners their agency, for there is always space for resistance and accommodation. But it emphasises differential access to the creation and moulding of discursive (both material and non-material) resources. Recognition of the productive dimension of representation implies that the very basis of world politics – identity – is challenged. The basic concepts of world politics such as power, national interest, state sovereignty, security, nationalism – all are up for grabs. No longer sacrosanct, these concepts can then be interrogated from a postcolonial perspective. Second, the recognition of the salience of Western representations of the non-West in world politics also questions the conventional view of international studies as a social ‘science’ which has little to do with culture, morality, society, and the like. It underlines the importance of culture as a factor in moulding, sustaining, and questioning political practices. It recognises world politics as a process of cultural interactions in which the identities of actors (including their values and visions) is not given prior to or apart from these interactions. Instead, they are shaped and constituted in the complexes of social practices that make up world politics. Rather than denying the importance of actors in enacting and reshaping the social practices in which they are embedded, it focuses our attention also on the social construction of actors. Thus, representation is an inherent and important aspect of global political life and therefore a critical and legitimate area of enquiry.

3A. Representation, identity, and IR

‘[C]ulture [, representation] and identity offer unmatched opportunities to sensitize the IR scholarly community to the research implications of the social construction of reality’ (Lapid 1996: 11).

‘A whole range of analyses in IR have taken this [Said’s] idea up and mapped the different ways in which the West constructs the non-western world’ (Diken and Laustsen 2001: 768). This comment is surprising, inaccurate and unjustified in my view, given that IR, including critical IR, with few exceptions,³ has more or less

today can only poison mine (1992: 339).

³ Hugh Gusterson (1999), in his article that challenges the boundary between IR and cultural anthropology, studies Western alarmism about nuclearisation of South Asia as ‘nuclear

ignored the questions raised by Orientalism critique. The question of representation has historically been excluded from the academic study of international relations and the 'price that international relations scholarship pays for its inattention to the issue of representation is perpetuation of the dominant modes of making meaning and deferral of its responsibility and complicity in dominant representations' (Doty 1996b: 171). Representation is a crucial dynamic of international politics and this is increasingly being recognised within international studies. As Roland Bleiker writes, '[s]ome of the most significant theoretical and practical insight into world politics emerges not from endeavours that ignore representation, but from those that explore how representative practices themselves have to constitute and shape political practices' (2001: 510). International relations are inextricably bound up with discursive practices that put into circulation representations that are then taken as truth. The modes of representation abet the widely orchestrated form of domination by making it acceptable and coherent within the ethos that constructs selves and exotic/barbaric⁴ Others.⁵ Not surprisingly Theodore Roosevelt could justify imperialist foreign policy as a fight against barbarism: 'It is our duty toward the people living in barbarism to see that they are freed from their chains...and we can free them only by destroying barbarism itself' (quoted in Cheyfitz 1997: 4). In more recent times,

one does not have to search very far to find a continuing complicity with colonial representations that ranges from a politics of silence and neglect to constructions of terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, international drug trafficking, and Southern immigration to the North as new threats to global stability and peace (Doty 1996b: 170).

Serious consideration of representation would involve recognition by IR scholars of their own complicity with dominant regimes of power, something that goes against their claims to objectivity. This makes it even more important for critical enterprises to engage with the theme of representation, to bare the will to power that exists at every level of IR theory and praxis.

orientalism'. See also Biswas (2001).

⁴ As I shall discuss later, exotic/barbaric are different sides of same coin of representational practices.

⁵ Roxanne Doty writes,

Encounters between the North and the South were (and are) such that the North's representations of 'reality' enabled practices of domination, exploitation, and brutality, practices that would have been considered unthinkable, reprehensible, and unjustifiable were an alternative 'reality' taken seriously. Alternative representations did indeed exist, but they were either marginalized or systematically silenced (1996b: 13).

Critical international theories no longer accept the unproblematic view of representation as merely the reflection of reality. A discursive approach that foregrounds the mutually constitutive relations between regimes of knowledge, representation, and truth is gaining wider currency. Discursive approaches tend to 'illustrate how...textual and social processes are intrinsically connected and to describe, in specific contexts, the implications of this connection for the way we think and act in the contemporary world' (George 1994: 191).⁶ The theoretical commitment to discourse productivity also makes it important to explain how a discourse *produces* this world – how it renders logical and proper certain policies by the authorities and, in the implementation of those policies, shapes and changes people's modes and conditions of living.

Adopting a discursive approach, Doty argues that North-South relations are more than an area of theory and practice in which various policies have been enacted and theories formulated. They are also the realm of politics wherein the very identities of peoples, states and regions are constructed through representational practices drawing upon an 'economy of abstract oppositions' (1996b: 2). Critical discursive approach denaturalises modes of representation that abet domination by 'making it acceptable and coherent within the dominant ethos that constructs domestic selves and exotic Others' (Shapiro 1988: 122-3). Discursive approach also shows that representation 'is a practice, one way of constructing world at the expense of others, which would attract other modes of abiding' (*Ibid.*). This change in the disciplinary landscape is welcome as it highlights the important role played by dominant representations in sustaining particular policy frameworks.

The focus within critical IR has been mainly on the constitutive function of representation in generating and sustaining particular policy regimes and on the identity politics of the representer. For instance, David Campbell (1998a) argues how the inscription of otherness was linked to the enframing of American identity. The work's theme is that the boundaries of a state's identity are secured by the representation of danger as being integral to foreign policy (*Ibid.*: 3). The Other, the non-West, lurks beneath this representation. Campbell's distinction between 'foreign

⁶ 'Discourse analysis is thus a post-positivist project that is critically self-aware of the closures imposed by research programmes and the modes of analysis which scholars routinely use in their work and treat as unproblematic' (Milliken 1999: 227).

policy’ and ‘Foreign Policy’ recognises the role of the Other, the non-West, in the framing of Foreign Policy as an instrument of statecraft. ‘Foreign Policy serves to *reproduce* the constitution of identity made possible by “foreign policy” and to *contain* challenges to the identity that results’ (*Ibid.*: 69). The Western self is constituted by estranging the non-Western Other; it is naturalised by pathologising the Other.

At one time or another, European and American discourse has inscribed women, the working class, Eastern Europeans, Jews, blacks, criminals, coloreds, mulattos, Africans, drug addicts, Arabs, the insane, Asians, the Orient, the Third World, terrorists, and others through tropes that have written their identity as inferior, often in terms of their being a mob or horde (sometimes passive and sometimes threatening) that is without culture, devoid of morals, infected with disease, lacking in industry, incapable of achievement, prone to be unruly, inspired by emotion, given to passion, indebted to tradition, or ...whatever ‘we’ are not (*Ibid.*: 89).

Though in *Writing security* (1998a), written originally in 1992, Campbell does not concern himself with the impact of ‘foreign policy’ on the Other, this changes slightly in his *National deconstruction* (1998b) in which, adopting a ‘deconstructive ethos’, he argues that ‘Otherness, representation, violence, complicity, responsibility – these are some of the many provocations forced upon us by Bosnia’ (Campbell 1998b: 11). The politics of representation played a crucial role here. Rather than being epiphenomenal, it was central to the way American and West European policy in Bosnia was scripted as comprising ‘ethnic hatred’, ‘warring factions’, ‘ancient animosities’, and so on. Ethnicity here is a term that

signifies relationships of power in the problematic of identity/difference rather than being a signifier for which there is a stable referent ... [it] is therefore better understood as a component of the representational politics of identity – particularly the identity of ‘others’ – and attempts to naturalize ethnicity are best regarded as efforts to remove the question of identity/difference and its materialization from the realm of politics (*Ibid.*: 92).

This ‘predominance of an ethnic register, with its associated historical assumptions and religious associations’ (*Ibid.*: 55) has had ‘real’ devastating consequences for the Bosnians involved. The consequences of deploying specific rhetorical tropes of representation on the identities of the represented is thus a theme that figures (though peripherally) in *National deconstruction*.

Similarly, in Weldes (1999a and 1999b) and especially in Weldes et al. (1999), representation is analysed as a central concept of international relations and foreign policy. Speaking of culture and representation as integral to IR, Weldes et al use culture in the sense that representations are produced in and out of ‘the context within

which people give meanings to their actions and experiences and make sense of their lives' (John Tomlinson quoted). Jutta Weldes (1996, 1999a, 1999b) looks at the ways in which identities are produced, reproduced and transformed. Discussing how representation plays a crucial role in social construction of national interests, she writes

[d]rawing on a wide array of already available cultural and linguistic resources, state officials create representations which serve, first to populate the world with a variety of objects, including both the self (i.e. the state in question) and others...[S]uch representations posit well-defined relations among these diverse objects...[and] in providing a vision of the world of international relations -- in populating that world with objects and in supplying quasi-causal or warranting arguments -- these representations have *already* defined the national interest...Interests are entailed in these representations because they (seem to) follow from the specific identities of the objects represented and the relations posited to obtain among them. Once a situation has been described, that is, national interest has already been determined -- it *emerges* out of the representations of identities and relationships constructed by state officials (1996: 282-3; emphasis in original).

Like Campbell, it is the foreign policy regime sustained by particular representational practices and the identity of the representer (the United States) which is under investigation.

Similarly, Iver Neumann studies the '*use* of "the East" as the other' (1999; emphasis added) as a general practice in the identity formation of Europe, Bradley Klein examines NATO 'as a set of [representational] practice by which the West has constituted itself as a political and cultural identity' (1990: 313), and Simon Dalby (1988) analyses how the Soviet Union was constructed as a dangerous Other in order to produce an ideological rationale for the US national security state. In all these cases of Western representation of the Other, the focus is on either its rationalising role in some foreign policy regime or on its productive effect on dominant identity discourses within the West. William Connolly writes, 'Identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty' (1991: 64). The focus within critical IR has mainly been on the Self/the representer, not on the Other/the represented. This is disturbing as it has the potential of replicating one of the main criticisms of mainstream IR -- that it is Western-centric and self-referential. After all, 'the power politics of identity wield coercive threats of representational force to trap adversarial identities into acquiescence' (Mattern 2001: 351).

Overall, thus, it is fair to say that not much attention has been paid to the impact of these Western representations on the represented. These works have not dealt with the poetics and politics of Western representations of the non-West from the vantage point of the latter. The focus has remained largely on a critique of Western practices, not on its productive and restrictive impact on the non-West. My emphasis is on the ways in which particular encounters between the West and the non-West have shaped the latter. Representations support not only particular politics of the representer toward the represented, but significantly, they construct the very identities of the actors involved, including the Other. Representations are productively linked with identity discourses of all kinds. The conventional idea that representation draws upon a pre-given identity is turned on its head, for it is identity that is fashioned out of particularised representations. In the case of Exotica Tibet, then, representational discourses are not the product of, but actually productive of, Tibetan identity. Within critical IR, the paucity of serious consideration of the ‘how’, ‘why’, and ‘what impact’ questions of Western representations of/on non-Western communities shows that the task of provincialising the West has only just begun. Since postcolonialism is particularly robust when it comes to the issue of cultural representations, West – non-West interactions, and identity politics, the importance of postcoloniality as an antidote to IR’s parochialism cannot be overemphasised.

3B. Theorising representation

If there is anything common among contemporary political, social, linguistic and cultural theories, it is the idea that any search for the true essence of a concept is futile. Meaning lies not in the object or word, but is constructed by signifying practices. In the space of this section, I provide my conceptualisation of representation (specifically as related to the production of knowledge about the Other), drawing upon relevant literature from social, cultural, and postcolonial theory.⁷ The purpose is not to arrive at its essential meaning but to reveal various meanings and usage of the term ‘representation’. This is not an attempt at mapping the vast literature that already exists on the topic, but to tease out those aspects that are relevant for the discussion of Exotica Tibet in later chapters.

⁷ It is important to point out here that the discussions of representation within political theory (for instance see Birch 1971; Marsh and Norris 1997; Phillips 1995; Pitkin 1967, 1969) are not directly helpful for my purpose here. They have paid little attention to new ideas coming from

Following Stuart Hall and his discussion of the wider question of the relationship between language, meaning, and representation, we can identify three distinct theories of representation: reflective,⁸ intentional⁹ and constructionist¹⁰ (1997a: 15-74). A detailed treatment of these theories is neither feasible nor desirable here. Here only social constructionist theory is discussed since it provides a robust understanding of representation. Constructionist theories are best suited for a contextualised understanding of social and political concepts like representation and identity. They do not argue that the material world does not exist, but that it acquires meaning only through the mediation of language and discursive systems. The constructionist theory of representation is that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Instead, meanings are contextual - it is the particular symbolic code that fixes, or tries to fix, meaning at a particular time. This production of meaning through difference and the coding of it also imply that meanings can never be permanently fixed. The constitutive, relational and processual character of representation needs to be taken into account for any meaningful enquiry.

Such a social constructionist approach studies culture as a constitutive process. The conception which underlines it is that of representation as entering into the very constitution of things. However, within the broad terrain of social constructionism,

social and cultural theory. For an exception see Seitz 1995.

⁸ Reflective/mimetic theory is based on the philosophy that meaning lies in the object or event in the real world, and language acts like a mirror merely reflecting pre-given meaning. The theory does not take into account the wider social, cultural and political context which inform and constitute all our enquiries and understandings. It leaves little room for interpretation. It pays little attention to the relationship between the represented and its representation.

⁹ In contrast to reflective theory, an intentional theory of representation focuses on authorial intention as the key factor in the creation of meaning; words and language mean what the author intends them to mean. However, like reflective theory, this too ignores the social and political character of language, power relations existing between 'author' and 'audience', and role of interpretation. Both reflective and intentional theories tend to read representation transparently and decontextualise it.

¹⁰ The term 'constructionist' is used here generically for all kinds of approaches that recognise language, representation, and identity as the products of historical and social construction. It is to be noted that while within cultural studies the term constructivist is often used as a substitute for constructionist, within international studies, it has its own specific meaning. Within cultural studies, constructionism/constructivism is used as umbrella term, while within IR, constructivism is a specific school of thought. A note of caution is in place here – when we speak of social constructionist theory, it shouldn't mask the plethora of approaches which are subsumed under the label of 'theory' for purposes of categorisation and rhetoric. Often, it is better to talk of social constructionist theories rather than theory to avoid imposing artificial unity.

there are diverse and often conflicting strands.¹¹ Along with Hall (*Ibid.*: 36-42), we may refer to two streams within social constructionism – a semiotic approach and a discursive approach to representation. The semiotic approach draws upon linguistics (particularly Ferdinand De Saussure’s work) under the assumption that in so far as all cultural objects convey meaning and all cultural practices depend on meaning, they work like language works and therefore are amenable to semiotic analysis. This provides a method for analysing how iconic (visual, bearing resemblance in form to the object to which they refer) as well as indexical (written or spoken signs which have completely arbitrary relation with the signified element) representations convey meaning. Such an approach is best exemplified in Roland Barthes’ writings, including his discussion of myth (1972). However, the preoccupation of semioticians with language often leads to neglect of the wider social context within which culture is played out (Hall 1997a: 36-42). It sanitises the muddy cultural politics of the contemporary world. Pervasive power relations are not given adequate attention. The lack of engagement with the role of power in representation is made even more conspicuous by the centralising role it plays within the second strand of the constructionist theory of representation – the discursive approach.

In the discursive approach, the primary concern shifts from relations of meaning to relations of power. Though this approach characterises the work of many scholars, no one has been more prominent than Michel Foucault (1970, 1972, 1980, 1984, 1986) in shaping it. Foucault widens the meaning of discourse, which in linguistics meant passages of connected writing or speech, to imply ‘a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - a way of representing the knowledge about - a particular topic at a particular historical moment...’ (in Hall and Gieben 1992: 291). Unlike the semioticians, Foucault is concerned with the production of knowledge and meaning not through language but through discourse. Discursive practices have their own inclusionary and exclusionary aspects.

Discursive practices are characterised by the delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Thus, each discursive practice

¹¹ Following Vivien Burr we may identify four features that may be considered as constituting social constructionism: a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge; historical and cultural specificity; recognition that knowledge is sustained by social processes; and finally, knowledge and social action go together (1995: 3-5). In a similar vein, Weldes et al (1999) discuss how a commitment to ‘critical social constructivist’ approach implies three interrelated analytic principles: affirmation of reality as socially constructed, exposing relations of power and locating agency, and denaturalising the taken-for-granted (13-21).

implies a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choices (Foucault 1986: 199).

Foucault's reformulation of discourse also calls for recognition of the explicit linkage between knowledge, truth, and power. Identification of the knowledge-power (*pouvoir/savoir*) nexus reveals the linkage of truth claims with systems of power:

(T)ruth isn't outside power, or lacking of power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of the world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault 1980: 291).

The recognition of the constructed character of truth facilitates a critical political positioning. Nothing is sacrosanct. However, this does not undermine the impact of truth claims on the lives of people. All knowledge, once applied in the 'real' world, has real effects, and in that sense becomes true.¹² This Foucauldian identification and exploration of link between power, knowledge, and truth is radical in its implication. It shifts the terrain of inquiry from the question 'what is truth?' to the question 'how do discursive practices constitute truth claims?'. In terms of representation, we may see the implication as a shift in the focus from some core reality beneath/behind representations to the modalities of their functioning. The question is no longer whether a representation is true or false, but what discursive practices operate to render it true or false. It is not only how representations reflect some subjects, but, more crucially, how subjectivity itself is constructed within discursive practices, how representational regimes are productive of subjectivity. Discourses then are 'practices which form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: 49). Bleiker points out, 'Representation is always an act of power. This power is at its peak if a form of representation is able to disguise its subjective origins and values' (2001: 515). Adopting this approach to Tibetanness, the pertinent question shifts from 'how far do representations (both Western and self-) of Tibetans *reflect* their identity' to 'how do

¹² This is linked to the frequent criticism of poststructuralism that it kills off the subject of knowledge and leaves no room for agency. As Gayatri Spivak clarifies, the poststructuralists 'situate subjecting rather than kill the subject or pronounce it dead. To question ... [the conviction that the man is the master of an unexamined subjective agency] is not to "kill the subject"' (1999: 322). It is to recognise that 'I am not outside the language that structures me, but neither am I determined by the language that makes this "I" possible' (Butler 1999: xxiv).

representational regimes affect the discursive production of Tibetanness'. This helps us look at Tibetanness as a politicised identification process, instead of some pre-given, essential object.

Tibetans are subjects of – as well as subjected to – the discourse of Tibetanness, a notion well captured in Foucault's notion of subjection/subjectification. Foucault's work offers three modes in which humans are made subjects. The first is through 'dividing practices' in which 'the subject is objectified by a division either within himself (*sic*) or from others' and human beings are given both a personal and a social identity (Foucault 1984: 8). Second is the 'scientific classification' arising from the modes of inquiry, which then try to give themselves the status of sciences. These two are more about domination, top-down flow, and social control. This is different from the third mode of 'subjectification', which is based on mediation of external authority with active processes of self-formation. It concerns the 'way a human being turns him - or herself into a subject' (*Ibid.*: 11).¹³

Foucault proposes and analyses the double-sided character of subjection/subjectification – the subject is *produced within the discourse* and is thus subjected (Hall 1996: 16). For instance, the discourse of sexuality produces identity categories such as 'straight' and 'gay'; at the same time, the processes of exclusion and inclusion impose restrictions on those identifying with these categories. All discourses construct *subject positions* from which they make sense. The subject cannot be outside discourse because it must be subjected to discourse and also exists within the knowledge (which is produced by discourse), the discursive formation of a particular period and culture. This view has tremendous implications for the issue of representation. It shows how representation is not only a discourse that constructs an object and subject of physical or imaginary gaze, but is also constitutive of another subject, one who is imagining and remembering, that is, one who is representing (the representer). Thus the representer as well as the represented are both implied within discourses of representation.¹⁴

¹³ Later works of Foucault deal with this (see for example, 1990a, 1990b, 1992).

¹⁴ Using a discursive approach, cultural theorists like Hall (1997b) have critically examined the play of forces within representations of groups characterised as the Other by the West. Rather than take the West as a pre-existing natural entity, it has been seen as an historical construct. 'The West', as a concept, has itself functioned as a system of representation, provided a model of comparison and categorisation, and thus acted as a criterion of evaluation. The idea of 'the

It is important for my analysis to underline the difference between the semiotic and discursive approaches (for a further elaboration, see Hall 1997a). The semiotic approach is concerned with the how of representation, with the internal articulation and production of meaning. This is the *poetics* of representation. The discursive approach is concerned with the production of social knowledge, with the question of institutional power, with the effects and consequences of representation. This is the *politics* of representation. Chapter 4, 5 and 7 will discuss both the poetics and the politics of Western representations of Tibet (Exotica Tibet). The semiotic approach entails examining how Tibet is imagined within Western culture by looking at literature (both fiction and non-fiction), films, travel accounts, etc. For instance, it shows how in recent years Tibet is represented as a mystical, peaceful, paradisaical land and lay bare the common rhetorical tropes used to produce an exoticised image of Tibet, the Exotica Tibet. On the other hand, an examination of the politics of representation informed by a discursive approach places expositions on Tibet in the context of power, neo-colonialism, (trans)nationalism, and Orientalism. It also focuses on the implications of such exercises in image making on those who are subjected to it – the Tibetans.¹⁵ Thus, a discursive approach emphasises the historical specificity of a particular form or regime of representation.

The adoption of a discursive approach helps us to see representation¹⁶ and identity as texts that can be read and misread in several different ways. As texts, their

West' did not reflect an already-established Western society; rather, it was essential to the very formation of that society. Hall, for instance, examines the ways in which 'the Rest' symbolised difference and played a central part in the constitution of 'the West' as an identity, and makes a persuasive argument for considering modernity as the story of 'the West and the Rest' (1992).

¹⁵ This is not to say that Westerners are untouched by these representations. The West's self-definition is often affirmed and/or questioned through such representations. This is particularly relevant here since a positive exoticisation of Tibet has as its corollary the idea of the materialist West as unhappy, decadent, and in need of help to regenerate. Though this aspect will be highlighted in various places, in the thesis the emphasis is mainly on the impact of the representation on the Tibetans.

¹⁶ While discussing representation, Spivak makes a distinction between *Vertretung* and *Darstellung*. The former she defines as 'stepping in someone's place; to tread in someone's shoes'. Representation in this sense is 'political representation' or a speaking for the needs and desires of somebody or something. *Darstellung* on the other hand is representation as representation, 'placing there'. Representing in this sense is thus 'proxy and portrait'. However, recognising the complexity of issue, she warns us to keep in mind the complicity between 'speaking for' and 'portraying' (Spivak 1996: 6). This is similar to Hanna Pitkin's discussion of *vertreten* and *darstellen* where the former has received the dominant share in political discourse. She points out that within political theory *darstellen* is not absent: both

understanding necessitates unprivileging authorial intention, interpretation, contextualisation, politicisation, and historicisation. Borrowing from Paul Ricoeur, James Clifford reveals the crucial process of textualisation involved in representation: 'Textualisation is the process through which unwritten behaviour, speech, beliefs, oral tradition, and ritual come to be marked as corpus, a potentially meaningful ensemble separated out from an immediate discursive or performative situation' (1986: 38). The constitutive relation of identity and difference lies at the core of representation. The issue of the representation of the non-Western peoples by the West occupies a central position in postcolonial theory.

3C. Postcolonialism and representation

The enterprise of postcolonial theory has unpacked the whole notion of their being a neutral academic expertise and highlighted how Western knowledge and representations of the non-Western world are neither innocent nor based on some 'reality', but implicated in the West's will to power, and its imperial adventures. The image of a scientific, apolitical, disinterested, knowledge-seeking 'gentleman' braving all odds to study non-Western cultures has been shattered beyond repair.¹⁷ Postcolonialism 'bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social within the modern world order' (Bhabha 1994: 171).

Various forms of representing the non-West – visual (films, television, photographs, paintings, advertisements, and so on) as well as textual (such as fiction, travelogue, journalism, ethnography, and anthropology) – were and still are closely linked to the production of imperial as well as neocolonial encounters. Asymmetry of productive power is a common trait shared by these encounters. As pointed out earlier, it is not

descriptive/microcosmic and symbolic representation derive from it. For a detailed discussion, see Pitkin 1967.

¹⁷ Colin Mackenzie, the first surveyor general of Madras in India, was clear about his necessary complicity in the brute realities of colonial power. He conflated the role of the soldier and the scientist and wrote:

That science may derive assistance, and knowledge be diffused, in the leisure moments of [military] camps and voyages, is no new discovery; but ... I am also desirous of proving that, in the vacant moments of an Indian sojourn and campaign in particular... such collected observations may be found useful, at least in directing the observation of those more highly gifted to matters of utility, if not to record facts of important to philosophy and science (quoted in Dirks 2001: 84).

only the represented (here the colonised, the third world, the South) who are subjects of and subjected to the process; even the representer (the coloniser, the first world, the West) is constructed by representational practices. This in no way implies similar experiences for the coloniser and the colonised (the representer and the represented). It only indicates that though everyone is subjected to representational practices, the impact differs according to the existing power relations. To illustrate this point, while both the West and Tibetans are subjects of Exotica Tibet, and the latter are not mere victims but exercise their agency through creative negotiations, the West does not have to construct its identity according to the perception of Tibetans. Westerners exoticise Tibet, and in turn, Tibetans exoticise the West. But while Western exoticisation has a productive impact on Tibetan identity discourse, the same cannot be said of Tibetan exoticisation. This reflects the asymmetry in their power relations.

Since representation inevitably involves interpretation, it is also important to note who may be doing the interpreting. There is a constant need to question representations in popular as well as academic discourses, even while acknowledging that their boundary is problematic. This questioning is particularly important when the representation of the subaltern, the disadvantaged, is involved. As Ella Shohat argues (1995), not only do the marginalised groups have little power over representation, the representations of them are both flawed (based on selective and simplified generalisations) and few in number. While negative images are seen as only part of the 'natural diversity' of dominant groups, particular images (often, but not always, negative) of the dispossessed tend to be taken, especially by mass media, as allegorical. A white person who commits a crime is seen as a criminal, while a black person who commits the same crime is seen as black as well as criminal, a black individual criminal is seen as allegorical of a criminalised black community. Since representations of the marginalised are relatively few, those available tend to be seen as representative, as typical, sometimes not only of members of a particular minority group, but of all minorities in general. It is assumed that any subaltern can stand in for any other subaltern. This collapsing of the image of the subaltern reflects not only ignorance but also a lack of respect for the diversity within marginalised communities. 'Representation of an underrepresented group is necessarily within the hermeneutics of domination, overcharged with allegorical significance' (Shohat 1995: 170).

The point about the marginalised is valid for minorities within states as well as for the marginalised beyond. Motifs of inscrutable Orientals, violent Arabs, fanatic Muslims,¹⁸ spiritual Tibetans, hungry Africans, mob-driven third world democracies, and so on, are commonly deployed in the Western media to describe non-Western Others. Shohat also suggests that representations in one sphere – the sphere of popular culture – affects the other spheres of representation, particularly the political one: ‘The denial of aesthetic representation to the subaltern has historically formed a corollary to the literal denial of economic, legal, and political representation. The struggle to “speak for oneself” cannot be separated from a history of being spoken for, from the struggle to speak and be heard’ (1995: 173). To cite a recent example, the projection by Western governments and Western media of Afghani women living under the Taleban as faceless (literally, due to compulsory veiling, and metaphorically) and nameless victims go hand in hand with the failure to consider them as political actors. Movements like RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan) that challenge the image of passive, mute women waiting for saviours from the West are usually not considered in political negotiations for a ‘post-Taleban’ government. Cultural representations of veiled women as nameless, faceless, and powerless are used as justification for their further political marginalisation.

The relation between representation and reality colours the discussions of representation in postcolonial studies. The word *re(-)presentation* contains the idea of presence *as well as* absence. It means making present something that is nevertheless literally absent. This paradox lies at the centre of any robust treatment of representation. Said, in his analysis of textual representations of the Orient, emphasises that representations can never be exactly realistic:

In any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a re-presence, or a representation. The value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such. On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such real thing as ‘the Orient’ ... (T)hat Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, ‘there’ in the discourse about it (1978: 21-22).

¹⁸ This image has been reinforced by media especially since the terrorist attacks in the US on September 11 2001. A barrage of pictures from various parts of the so-called Islamic world is used to reinforce the notion of Islamic fundamentalism.

The negotiation between representation and reality is continuous and unresolvable. Therefore, the pursuit of a 'true representation' is a non-starter. The task should be for 'better' contextualised representations.

Thus, it is clear that representations affect the ways in which actual individuals and groups are perceived. Representations may not reflect reality, but they do have 'real effects' on the lives of people. For instance, the motif of violent Arabs and radical Islam ensures that the Palestinian resistance (even when unarmed) generates more alarm than sympathy in the West. The notion of representation as a harmless likeness should therefore be thrown away in the dustbin of history.

The issue of representation lies at the very core of colonial, and by extension neocolonial, discourses. Various modes of representation have aided and abetted forms of domination by making them acceptable and coherent within the dominant ethos that constructed selves and exotic others. Even when Orientalist and kindred discourses were not aggressive, through exoticism or primitivism, they nevertheless became legislative, by privileging certain identities and stigmatising others as inauthentic (Thomas 1994: 26). Given the usual esteem within which the Self is constituted, even the (positive) exoticising of the Other almost invariably amounts to the constitution of that Other as a less-than-equal subject. This can be seen in the case of Tibetans who have been represented in excessively positive terms, especially in recent years. Instead of leading to greater appreciation of their agency, their identity is dehistoricised and depoliticised in a victimisation paradigm – as we shall see in chapters 6 and 7, Tibetans are seen mainly as victims, either of Chinese brutality or of Western exoticisation.

Once again it should be emphasised that an understanding of the way the non-Western people were represented within the colonial and Orientalist discourse can help in understanding that the very same processes continue in the contemporary world. The representations of the non-West within Western discourses – both academic and popular – are still enmeshed in asymmetrical power relations. A conscious 'desire to anthropologize the West' (Rabinow quoted in Maanen 1995: 15) and efforts at 'provincializing Europe' (Chakrabarty 2000) do not deny the dominance of Western ideas and practices at the global level. They strive to reveal the tremendous power invested in the maintenance of this dominance and to clear a space for counter-

hegemonic ideas and practices. While focusing on hegemony, we must not ignore resistance to it.¹⁹ I emphasise this in detail in the next section when I look at the merits and weaknesses of the Orientalism critique put forward by Said and argue for its *critical* appropriation.

3D. Exotica Tibet as an Orientalist construct

Regimes of truth and knowledge about the non-West are not products of neutral academic and other enquiry but accomplices in the West's will to power. Even though earlier anti-imperialist writing sometimes recognised this, it was Edward Said's *Orientalism* that single-handedly jolted the disciplines concerned with knowledge production about the West's Other. Publication of the book in 1978 'inaugurated the postcolonial field', says Homi Bhabha (Moore-Gilbert et al. 1997: 21-22), while Spivak considers it as a 'source book' through which 'marginality' itself has acquired the status of a discipline in the Anglo-American academy (Spivak 1993: 56). But the best comment on the work came from Partha Chatterjee: 'For me, child of a successful anti-colonial struggle, *Orientalism* was a book which talked of things I felt I had known all along but had never found the language to formulate with clarity' (1993:

¹⁹ 'Self representation' may not be a complete possibility and is not always liberating. Yet it is still an important goal within the postcolonial world. This does not entail a complete halt to representations of the Other but calls for extreme caution, reflexivity, and recognition of the historical baggage involved. This issue is particularly important in anthropology and ethnography, which are in the business of producing knowledge mostly about other cultures. Postcolonial theoretical insights are particularly important here as we are witnessing more self-conscious endeavours and recognition of complicity with dominant political regimes (including imperialism) leading to more radical conception of others (see Bond and Gilliam 1994; Clifford 1986; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Fabian 1990; Maanen 1995).

In 'Can the Subaltern Speak', Spivak emphasises the difficulty (rather 'impossibility' in one sense) of representation by subaltern individuals (1988). Rey Chow further explains this point by arguing that there is an 'essential untranslatability from the subaltern discourse to imperialist discourse' (1993: 35). Indeed, increased self-representation or the inclusion of more individuals from marginalised groups will not necessarily alter the structural or institutional barriers that prevent equal participation for all in representation, yet it is far better than maintaining the status quo. We need to challenge representations of the status quo and the ideological work they do and present counter-hegemonic alternatives if possible. As Linda Hutcheon puts it: 'Representation cannot be avoided, but it can be studied to show how it legitimates certain kinds of knowledge and, therefore, certain kinds of power' (1988: 230). Efforts will continue to be made to challenge the dominant force of representation for this force is not completely pervasive, and subversions are possible. Representation being a discursive practice, meaning can never be permanently fixed and hence changes and subversions are always possible. Where there is power, there is always resistance – as Foucault says, 'there are no relations of power without resistances' (1980: 142). The Foucauldian conceptualisation of power offers hope that even in most extreme exploitation and deprivation, victims are never passive.

194). Though drawing heavily on Said's work, I am not oblivious to a number of problems with his thesis.

Said's *Orientalism* (1978) attacked a number of cherished notions of the post-enlightenment Western world. Since then, Orientalism has lost the status of a sympathetic concept – a notion that it was a product of scholarly admiration for diverse and exotic cultures – and has come to be considered as the literary means of creating a stereotypical and mythic 'East' through which European rule could be more easily asserted (MacKenzie 1995: xii). It inaugurated a serious questioning of the complicity of knowledge and culture with power and empire. My treatment of Exotica Tibet – the poetics and politics of Western representations of Tibet – subscribes to the Said-inspired Orientalism critique.

Although some of the components of Said's arguments may have been formulated earlier, a great deal of power derives from his interdisciplinarity, his ability to bring previously disparate elements into what Walter Benjamin called a 'constellation', a new and significant disposition of materials which open up the possibility for altered historical understanding (in Williams and Chrisman 1993: 128). Using the methodological techniques of *strategic location* and *strategic formation*, Said calls into question the underlying assumptions that form the foundation of Orientalist thinking. While strategic location is 'a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he (*sic*) writes about', strategic formation is 'the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large' (Said 1978: 20). He elaborates strategic formation further:

None of this takes place in the abstract. Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient *affiliates* itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself (*Ibid.*).

This device of strategic formation is very applicable in the case of Tibet too. Even the early modern Western travellers to Tibet (mostly missionaries) drew upon an 'archive'²⁰ of knowledge gathered in the form of 'traveller's tale', legends, myths, and rumours.

²⁰ The role of an archive in representation would be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

Orientalism, among other things, is a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even bureaucracies and colonial styles. The Tibetan variant of Orientalism was directly connected to British imperial interests in India and China. 'Experts' on Tibet were mostly in the direct service of the British Indian bureaucracy. Military expeditions like the British invasion of Tibet in 1903-04 included botanists, bird collectors, cartographers, zoologists, and the like. British political interests not only dictated the production of knowledge about Tibet, but also its dissemination. Prestigious bodies like the *Royal Geographical Society* and newspapers like *The Times* colluded with political institutions in determining what counted as valid knowledge and what did not through selective emphasis and censorship (McKay 2001: 80-2).

Orientalism is also a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident'. It is a Western practice of dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient. In this sense, therefore, the Orient is an integral part of European material civilisation and culture (Said 1978: 2-3). This has little to do with the corporeality of 'the Orientals': it is true of negative, positive, as well as ambiguous depictions. As I discuss in more detail in chapter 5, this point can be illustrated through the theosophical movement and the myth of Shangri-la. Madame Helena Blavatsky and her theosophical movement's Tibetan 'mahatmas' – the source of ancient occultic and mystical secrets of the universe, which outlined the future of human history – had nothing to do with the Tibetan people. Even her claim of having travelled to Tibet is highly dubious and 'the Orientals' she met were Indians. Similarly, James Hilton's Shangri-la – the hidden valley in *Lost horizon* (1933), a secret repository of ancient Eastern wisdom and Western classical achievements – had Europeans as the elite and Tibetans as the subaltern. Though the myth of Shangri-la came to be associated with Tibet, it was a placeless utopia using Tibet and Tibetans merely as a backdrop for the adventures of Westerners. Tibet as a Shangri-la performed the role of a service society at a psychic level, existing for the West's self-gratification and self-criticism.

As Said argues, Orientalism defines the West: the Occident as a category cannot exist without the Orient. Inversely, the Orient only exists from a Western vantage point. The relation between the two is frequently expressed in loaded terms: 'The Orient is

irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, “different”; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, “normal” (1978: 40).

‘Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient’s difference with its weakness’ (*Ibid.*: 204). The very presence of a ‘field’ such as Orientalism, with no corresponding equivalent in the Orient itself suggests the relative strength of the actors concerned. The situation has not changed significantly even at the beginning of the twenty-first century. For instance, Europeans and Americans are experts on all areas of the world. But non-Westerners can at best hope to be ‘native’ informers or experts in their own region. For a crisis in Afghanistan, we come across several Western as well as non-Western experts (the latter would invariably be from the region). But for the crisis in Northern Ireland, one hardly finds a non-European, non-American commentator. Let me clarify this through my personal experience. The following scenario is very typical of my experience in public gatherings like conferences.

‘So, what is your research on?’

‘Western cultural representations of Tibet and its relevance in world politics’.

‘Very interesting. Are you a Tibetan?’

‘No. I am an Indian’.

‘Are you then a Buddhist?’

‘No. I am an atheist’.

Quizzical and perplexed expressions greet me. These seemingly innocent questions are power laden, something that is felt experientially by the recipient (in this case, me). These may apparently be based on ignorance, but they reflect unspoken assumptions about who has the legitimacy to study Western practices and critique them. It is unlikely that any Western person would have been asked these questions, especially the second one. In the disciplines studying political and cultural communities, it is common and acceptable for Western persons to study anyone, including both Western and non-Western societies. But a non-Western-looking person with expertise (or working toward an expertise) in Western practices is considered something out of the ordinary. If this is the case in 2001, it comes as no surprise that during the heyday of Orientalism (the nineteenth and early twentieth century), ‘the Orientals’ were the objects of the gaze, of scholarship, and of expertise. They could gaze back at the West, but only in awe, envy, hatred, or anger. This gaze did not have the backing of the

enormous discursive and institutional structures that lay behind the gaze of an Orientalist.

Said makes a distinction between manifest and latent Orientalism (1978: 201-26). Latent Orientalism is an unconscious certainty about what the Orient is. Discussing the works of nineteenth century European writers, he argues that latent Orientalism is characterised by ‘unanimity, stability, and durability’ as ‘[e]very one of them [the writers] kept intact the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability’ (*Ibid.*: 206). The Orient’s progress and value are judged in terms of, and in comparison to, the West, so it is always the Other, the conquerable, and the inferior. Manifest Orientalism is what is spoken and acted upon – it is at this level that differences can be found. It includes information and changes in knowledge about the Orient as well as policy decisions founded in Orientalist thinking. It is the expression in words and actions of latent Orientalism.

The idea of knowledge as power is present throughout Said’s critique. By knowing the Orient, the West came to control it. The Orient became the studied, the seen, the observed, the object; Orientalist scholars were the students, the seers, the observers, and the subject. The Orient was passive; the West was active. Orientalism thus became a created body of theory and practice with material investment. It became and still is in the minds of many ‘a living tableau of queerness’ (*Ibid.*: 103). Said further argues how media as well as policy makers in the USA still work within an Orientalist frame of mind and so the threat of Orientalism is as real today for non-Western people as it was in the colonial era.²¹ A rejection of Orientalism entails a rejection of biological generalisations, cultural essentialisms, and racial and religious prejudices. Rejection of Orientalist thinking does not signify a denial of the differences between the West and the Orient, but rather an evaluation of such differences in a more critical fashion. It involves questioning the politics that fuels this exercise in differentiation and the meanings attached to the differences. It questions the very categories of the Occident/West and the Orient.

²¹ For his scathing criticism of Western media depiction of Islam, see Said 1997

Adoption of an Orientalist critique does not imply taking on board all of Said's arguments. There are several problems, which caution against an unquestioning appropriation of the Saidian thesis. Interrogating *Exotica Tibet* then requires a critical appropriation of his critique. This makes it important for me to highlight some of his problematic arguments and assumptions²² and avoid replicating the same in my interrogation. A first reading of the book may leave one overwhelmingly impressed with Said's ability to expose the enterprise of Western knowledge of the East (Orientalism) as something inextricably linked with power. It was only after considerable reflection that I came across some significant lacuna.

The first problem I had was with the scope of the book. Students of history come across many books which claim in the space of a few hundred pages to write the entire 'History of Asia', 'History of Europe', and even the 'History of the World'. Such enterprises, replete with fantastic and sweeping generalisations, make one sceptical of any work claiming to study a phenomenon that has endured for almost two millennia. When Said writes that Orientalism characterises Western thinking about the East for such a long period of time, one is left to wonder why it persisted for so long. If he had confined his theses to the period since the expansion of European colonialism and imperialism, it would perhaps have been more acceptable. While fantastic notions about the foreign lands circulated within what came to be identified as the West since ancient times, the nexus between fantasy, knowledge production and political dominance – a crucial ingredient of Orientalism – is a product of modern times.

Writing in exaggerated, exoticised/disparaging terms about a different/foreign culture was not something confined to Western travellers and scholars only. This has been ignored by Said. For instance, Chinese, Arab, French, and British travellers all wrote in a similar way about India exoticising and debasing in different periods of time. What makes the British writings on India different from the others is the fact that British travel and scholarly accounts belong to a period when British imperialism was emerging in India. It is the constitutive relation with the process of imperialism that makes Orientalism a significant political force. Similarly, negative images of Tibetans were common in Chinese imperial and popular discourses even before the impact of

²² For a sample of critiques ranging from sympathetic ones to those rejecting his thesis, see Ahmad 1992; Mani and Frankenberg 1985; Moore-Gilbert et al. 1997; Porter 1982; Sardar 1999; Sprinker 1992.

Europeans. British officials, including Colonel Francis Younghusband, who led the Lhasa Mission of 1903-04, allude to Chinese contempt for 'barbaric' Tibetans. In contemporary times, within Tibet, Chinese representations of Tibetans have more salience than Western representations, as it is China that has political control. Yet at the same time, nineteenth and early twentieth century Western representations are still important as they have been appropriated by the Chinese. The notion of Tibetan backwardness has been reinforced in official and popular Chinese discourses through a mix of traditional ethnocentrism with Western-inspired evolutionism (human communities as occupying different stages in progress toward civilisation), its civilising mission, its theory of development, and the teleology inherent in the Marxist notion of mode of production (see Heberer 2001; Kolas 1998; Sautman and Hairong 2000; Wei Jingsheng 1998). Therefore while we may look at Exotica Tibet essentially as a Western construct, we must recognise that it competes with and complements the Chinese representations of Tibet. Chinese political control over Tibet means that its representations directly affect the lives of more Tibetans than does Exotica Tibet. However, an analysis of Exotica Tibet is still important, not only because of its overwhelming influence in the diaspora, but also because the current Chinese representations heavily draw upon the European colonialist and Orientalist repertoire of images, especially the negative ones.

Said's Orientalism critique, also contains a major contradiction in the relationship between imperialism and Orientalism, and between power and knowledge. If Orientalism preceded the material practices and politics of imperialism, how did it become complicit with the latter? Was it incorporated and hence misused as the scholarly arm of the imperial process, which was in turn determined by dynamics of materialist production? Or was the nineteenth century incarnation of Orientalism a product of imperialism, as Said seems to imply in some places? Though these questions are important, power and knowledge relate to each other at several different levels and therefore instead of trying to search for some direct causal relation, we must emphasise complexity.

Said recognises changes within the Orientalist discourse but underplays them in a way that leaves the book open to criticisms of essentialising and homogenising diverse historical phenomena as *the* phenomenon of Orientalism. That is, while providing a critique of the essentialisms inherent in the Orientalist discourse, Said himself falls

prey to it. Lisa Lowe (1991), in her critical study of French and British Orientalisms, challenges the assumption that Orientalism monolithically constructs the Orient as the Other of the Occident. On the one hand, Orientalism consists of an uneven matrix of Orientalist situations across different cultural and historical sites, and on the other, each of these Orientalisms is internally complex and unstable (*Ibid.*: 5). Orientalism is thus characterised as much by difference as by sameness. As my study of Exotica Tibet will show, Tibet as a site of Orientalist desires, representations, and practices, had its own peculiarities. Some of these include the overwhelming attention to and importance of religion; geographical and imaginative location at the edge of British empire; closed, mystical place resisting opening up (for most part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries); celibate monks as the main custodian of culture (unlike women as in most other societies); the figure of the Grand Lama, the ‘god-king’, and so on. Representations differed depending on the historical period in question, (British) imperial needs, and the personality, nationality, gender, and occupation of the representer. Tibet presented itself as a ‘true *complexio oppositorum*, a rich complexity of contradictions and oppositions’ (Bishop 1989: 63).²³ Exotica Tibet itself is a convenient label for diverse and often contradictory Western representations of Tibet. It should therefore be considered a complex discursive construct characterised by the play of consistency, contradiction, and possibility.

Another important issue that did not receive adequate attention from Said is the element of Occidentalism that underpinned Orientalism, as well as resistances to it. Often Orientalists started with a specific self-image, with particular assumptions about the Occident, the West, an idea that was in turn constructed by Orientalism. Those who characterised the West positively as the sole possessor of rationality and scientific temper (most colonialists and adventurers) held a pejorative view of Tibet for lacking the same, and thus affirmed the West’s superiority. However, for those who considered the very lack of these characteristics in Tibetans to be positive and as providing space for mysticism (like the theosophists), it was the West that was degenerate and materialist. The same representations of Tibet were evaluated differently by different individuals and groups, depending on their self-image, their image of the West, and their interests. Tibet’s spirituality defined the West’s materialism; its dream-like nature defined the West’s corporeality; its peripheral

²³ He borrows this term for ‘a complex mix of opposites’ from Carl Gustav Jung (Bishop

location defined the West's centrality. This circular relation between Occidentalism and Orientalism continues even today, albeit in more sophisticated forms, so that the non-Western world is often seen as being what West is not. Poverty, lack of democracy, endemic violence is 'out there' in the third world; the West is prosperous, democratic, and peaceful. While Occidentalism has been a characteristic of Western knowledge enterprises like anthropology (see Carrier 1995), there is no denying the fact that it has and is also practised by non-Westerners too, often with a vengeance. The West is often perceived as an undifferentiated unit by non-Westerners and invested with desires of all kind, though, as noted above, this has significantly less impact on the represented.²⁴

Said has been able to incorporate diverse scholarly writing over a long period of time within the framework of Orientalism through the use of his categories of latent and manifest Orientalisms. While the differences between individual accounts can be accounted for as manifest Orientalism, there is an underlying latent Orientalism, which makes them a part of an archive, an archive that is a partner in the West's subjugation of the East. Now, while Said argues how this very understanding/constitution of the East/West dichotomy is problematic and an essential trope of Orientalism project, he repeats the same binary logic in his formulation of latent and manifest Orientalisms.²⁵

Orientalism certainly read the colonised as passive, feminine, irrational, and hence without agency in history. But the representations were full of ambiguity. Said recognises some contradictions within Orientalism, but does not pay adequate attention to them. His concentration on colonial discourse and the canonical texts within it leads him to ignore resistance literature and orature in the colonies as well as texts critical of Orientalism within the West.²⁶

1999)

²⁴ For an interesting take on the deployment of specific images of the West inside China (both by the government and the dissidents), see Chen 1995.

²⁵ These contradictions are largely due to his attempt at synthesising Foucault's discourse theory approach with the Gramscian theory of hegemony. There is a 'persistent hermeneutical short-circuit at the very centre of his thesis' as he fails to harmonise these distinct methods of cultural analysis, each with its own distinct epistemology, social values, and political assumptions (Clifford 1986: 260). Samuel Weber puts the theoretical problems in *Orientalism* succinctly: 'a social and historical critique which does not consider the conflictual structure of its own discursive operations will only reproduce the constraints it is seeking to displace' (quoted in Young 1990: 129).

²⁶ He pays attention to this in *Culture and Imperialism* (Said 1994) where he points out that '[n]ever was it the case that the imperial encounter pitted an active Western intruder against a

Said recognises that to some extent the nature of colonial Orientalist discourse is gendered as a largely male institutional practice with a masculinist style. However his treatment of gender is inadequate. Orientalism was not only 'male' in terms of institutional practice, but also operated with particularised notions of masculinity and femininity. Women were the producers of Orientalist discourse as much as the subjects of it. European women played a significant part in the reproduction of imperialism. The role was not, however, the exact replica of that of their male counterparts (see McClintock 1995; for a discussion of gender and imperialism, see Midgley 1998; Sharpe 1992). As Reina Lewis argues, gendered access to the positionalities of imperial discourse produced a gaze upon the Orient and the Orientalised Other that registered difference less pejoratively and less absolutely than was implied by Said's original formulation (1996: 4). Apart from gender, Said also ignored the question of sexuality in the Orientalist enterprise. A growing body of recent work such as Sara Suleri's *Rhetoric of English India* (1992) suggest that Said's unconscious masculinism is of a narrowly heterosexist kind.

Exotica Tibet too is gendered, sometimes implicitly, at other times, quite explicitly. This shall be discussed in detail in the next chapter under 'eroticisation' as a representational strategy. Here I would only like to make some preliminary points. Sociologically, most of the travellers to Tibet were men operating with specific notions of masculinity. As Said points out, in the writings of these travellers and Western novelists,

women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing...The male conception of the world, in its effect upon the practicing Orientalist, tends to be static, frozen, fixed eternally. The very possibility of development, transformation, human movement – in the deepest sense of the word – is denied the Orient and the Oriental. As a known and ultimately an immobilized or unproductive quality, they come to be identified with a bad sort of eternality: hence, when the Orient is being approved, such phrases as 'the wisdom of the East' (1978: 207-8).

British officials explicitly discouraged female travellers who were seen as a threat to British prestige. Basil Gould, the political agent in Sikkim and later the head of 1936 Lhasa Mission, decreed that women were not permitted to travel in Tibet without a male escort (McKay 1997: 172-3). The accounts of the few women travellers to Tibet

supine or inert non-Western native; there was *always* some form of active resistance, and in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out' (xii).

differ from their male counterparts, showing a concern for personalities rather than using Tibet for action adventures or imperial issues (Bishop 2001). The sexualised metaphor of the veil was widely prevalent in describing Tibet as a closed entity resisting 'opening up'. The metaphor was in common currency particularly during the Younghusband mission (1903-04). Edmund Candler (1905), a *Daily Mail* correspondent, wrote his account of the invasion as the 'unveiling of Lhasa', while Lord Curzon wrote to the Norwegian explorer Sven Hedin regretting that the mission 'destroyed the virginity of the bride to whom you aspired' (McKay 1997: 199). The 'loss of virginity' did not end the mystique of Tibet/Lhasa as a 'thick veil' descended immediately after the expedition (Peter Fleming's introduction to Harrer 1956: 7). The metaphor has entered the vocabulary of the Chinese state and intellectuals too. One of its 'white papers' opens with the line 'Once regarded as a mysterious region, Tibet has long thrown off its veil to reveal itself to the world' (Information Office 1992). Discussing the Western representations of Tibet as a 'myth of the Western world', Wang Lixiong writes, 'Tibet is like a veil that has not yet been fully lifted to the West, with the process of exploring the mysticism and idealism in the Western mind about China and other Oriental countries never having been finished' (1999).

One can hardly disagree with Michael Sprinker's assessment of Said's Orientalism critique: 'Specialists in these fields have often been critical of his interventions, but they have not on the whole been able to ignore or dismiss him out of hand' (1992: 2). The boundaries drawn by colonial and neo-colonial Western hegemony have been repeatedly dissolved by the debate that was inaugurated by *Orientalism*. It has led the critics of Orientalism (that is, those who agree with the thesis of *Orientalism* in some way or the other) to dislocate the centrality of the West often through 'catachrestic appropriation of Western theory derived from cross-hatching of histories of knowledge and criticism' (Prakash 1995a: 206).

Within Tibetan studies, reception of *Orientalism* has been mixed. While scholars such as Peter Bishop (1989, 1997, and 1998), Donald Lopez (1998), Toni Huber (2001) and Heather Stoddard (2001) have drawn from Said's thesis, others have questioned its applicability in the Tibetan situation (see for instance, McKay 2001, Penderson 2001, Sperling 2001). The case for what can be termed 'Tibetan exceptionalism' (the non-relevance of the Orientalism critique in the study of Exotica Tibet) is based on a number of factors – no European colonisation of Tibet, lack of internal consistency in

Western conceptions, willing participation of the Tibetans, and paternal rather than coercive power relationship between the British and the Tibetans. It is my contention that those who argue against the deployment of the Orientalist critique for interrogating Western representations of Tibet misunderstand *Orientalism*. Several examples are perhaps telling – I illustrate with arguments of Alex McKay (2001), Poul Penderson (2001) and Elliot Sperling (2001).

Drawing upon Lionel Caplan's notion of the 'pastoral mode' (discursive practice in which subordinate peoples in the imperial process are represented in approving terms), McKay argues that while the works of British officials concerned with Tibet (the 'Tibet cadre') maintain a paternal perspective, they are not 'primarily concerned with power in the sense usually associated with "Orientalism"'; instead of exoticisation of subjects, the relationship was based on mutual respect (2001: 84). This contention fails to appreciate the Foucauldian notion of power – Orientalism is not only about repressive power relations, but also productive ones. Paternalism is as much a part of imperialism and Orientalism as brute force. In any case, 'the ideology of empire was hardly ever a brute jingoism, rather, it made subtle use of reason, and recruited science and history to serve its ends' (Kabbani 1986: 6).

The Orientalist critique does not contend only with the negation of 'the Orientals' but also with their idealisation and with the construction of the very category of 'the Oriental'. While we can agree with Penderson that 'the relationship between the East and the West was (and is) much more complex and politically ambiguous than Said suggests...[and that scholars]...have paid too little attention to the way Orientals have appropriated the Orientalist discourse', the contention that 'the theosophists provide a strong case against Edward Said's simplistic argument against Orientalism as a Western repressive mode of representation' (2001: 165) is hard to swallow. The theosophist notion of Tibet as an abode of benevolent brotherhood of mahatmas (wise men) was very much a part of imperialism and Orientalism. It was imperialism that gave theosophists the 'permission' to conjure up a secret brotherhood in the unknown terrain of Tibet, at the edge of British India. Active participation of 'the Orientals' themselves in the theosophist movement and similar counter-cultural movements (apparently based on recognition of the spirituality of the East) does not question Orientalism; rather, it emphasises the imaginative grip of Orientalism on everyone involved, even the represented.

In a similar vein, Sperling announces that ‘the critique of stereotypical images of Asia that has been sprawled by *Orientalism* is in many instances the product of a large scale decontextualisation: The non-Western precedents for these stereotypes – including those of Tibet itself – are wholly ignored’ (2001: 322). He goes on to say that the

[B]est-known whipping boy in this context, the Western notion of Tibet as shangri-la, is a good example, with antecedents going back to several centuries. In the thirteenth century already we find an Arabic description of Tibet that notes: ‘In the country of Tibet are special properties in respect of their air and water, their mountains and plains. A man there laughs and rejoices continually’ (Sperling 2001: 329).

This misses the crucial point – the critical endeavour is not only about stereotypes; rather, it is about stereotypes operating under the guise of objective knowledge production, backed by the force of imperialism. The tremendous inequality that underlies these representational practices cannot be ignored. Arabic exoticisation of Tibet, or for that matter Tibetan exoticisation of the West, does not have the same productive effect on the identity of the represented. The productive capacity of representational practices is directly connected to discursive and corporeal aspects of power. Does Occidentalism affect the identities of ‘Occidentals’ as much as Orientalism affects ‘the Orientals’? Why do Tibetans have to negotiate within this framework? Why can they not construct their own without reference to Western ideas and concepts? It is hard not to realise how this is linked intimately to European imperialism.

3E. Conclusion

Therefore, a critical appropriation of the Orientalism critique is not only helpful but also crucial for understanding and interrogating Exotica Tibet which has been a product-in-construction of Western (neo)colonialism and (neo)Orientalism. Adopting a general social constructionist approach to representation and critically appropriating the Orientalism critique, we can look at Exotica Tibet as an Orientalist construct operating through three general modes and a few specific strategies of representation. The next chapter goes on to look at these modes and strategies of representation.

Chapter 4: Western representations of the Other: rhetorical modes and strategies

‘I would say that the West is very young, it’s very corrupt. We’re not very wise. And I think we’re hopeful that there is a place that is ancient and wise and open and filled with light’ (Richard Gere, Frontline 1998b).

Within the context of imperialism, the issue of the representation of natives was often considered as belonging to the realm of either scientific objective ethnography, journalistic commentaries, or fiction. A clear boundary was said to exist between fiction and non-fiction writing. It was presumed that, unlike fiction, non-fiction writing such as literary and popular journalism, exploration writings, travel writings, memoirs of colonial officials, and so on are unmediated by the consciously aesthetic requirements of imaginative literature. Emphasis was on the recording of observed facts. However, as argued earlier, such views are no longer tenable. The mask of objectivity seeks to hide relations of inequality and domination. Even non-fiction writings are permeated with rhetorical tropes. They are not epiphenomenal. What Rana Kabbani points out about travel writing holds true for non-fictional writings in general: it ultimately produced ‘a communal image of the East’, which ‘sustained a political structure and was sustained by it’ (1986: 10). While my discussion is mainly about Western colonial discourse, these tropes remain central to the production and reproduction of neocolonial relations.

In this chapter, I shall look at rhetorical tropes¹ in terms of three general *modes* (and possible ways of challenging them) that underlie all Western representations of the non-West and then discuss some important *strategies* that are deployed to operationalise Orientalist constructs such as Exotica Tibet. The three significant modes of representation are essentialism, stereotyping, and exoticism. The strategies of representation are similar to what Edward Said calls ‘the techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, “there” in discourse about it’ relying upon ‘institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient’ (1978: 22). For the purpose of this study, many of these strategies will be twinned with their seemingly opposite

¹ ‘Within colonialist discourse, metaphors, tropes, and allegorical motifs played a constitutive role in “figuring” European security. For Hayden White, troping is “the soul of discourse”, the mechanism without which discourse “cannot do its work or achieve its ends”’ (Shohat and Stam 1994: 137).

phenomena (such as debasement and idealisation). This is done to highlight that even though representational claims are made in the name of simplicity, essentiality, and clarity, it is complexity, oppositionality, and ambivalence that lie at the heart of Orientalist projects like *Exotica Tibet*. These will be studied under the headings of *archive*, *gaze*, *differentiation-classification*, *debasement-idealisation*, *eroticisation-moralisation*, *chronopolitics*, *infantilisation-gerontification*, *naturalisation*, and *self-affirmation-self-criticism*. The theoretical framework set out in this chapter will help me to de-construct² the *text* of *Exotica Tibet* as it relies heavily on the multiple meanings of words and phrases, on substitutions, on intertextuality, on exclusions and inclusions, on the play of meanings, on repetition, on generalisation.

4A. Modes of representation

4A.i. Essentialism

² Deconstruction is not about destruction as it is alleged by most of its detractors, including many within Tibetan studies. For instance, Jeffrey Hopkins says ‘...it is not sufficient to engage in destructive criticism, even if it clothed in highfalutin terms like “deconstructionism”...I do not want to become satisfied with image blasting, as if the exercise of criticism – meaning here fault-finding – is sufficient. It is not’ (2001: 258). Yes, it is not enough to engage in destructive criticism, but this is a misleading picture of deconstruction as a strategy. Deconstruction is not only about faultfinding. For the detractors, I would like to quote Barbara Johnson’s clarification of the term:

Deconstruction is not synonymous with ‘destruction’, however. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word ‘analysis’ itself, which etymologically means ‘to undo’ – a virtual synonym for ‘to de-construct’ ... If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text’s critical difference from itself (in Cuddon 1991: 222).

Deconstruction is certainly not a depoliticising mode that ignores contexts. As Jacques Derrida has observed, ‘one of the definitions of what is called deconstruction would be the effort to take this limit-less context [the “realhistory-of-the-world”] into account, to pay the sharpest and broadest attention possible to context, and thus to an incessant moment of recontextualisation’ (quoted in Campbell 1998b: 21). A deconstructive approach involves ‘critically examining the discursive processes of materialization that produce settlements – such as the idea of pre-given subjects – upon which the criteria for judgement are based’ (*Ibid.*: 30). Judith Butler has also argued that: ‘The deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated’ (quoted in Campbell 1998a: 205). Deconstruction is particularly relevant for Tibet, which has been the victim of modernity offering limited possibility for emancipation. In contrast to modern, conventional methods, deconstruction is about ‘the opening of the future itself, a future which does not allow itself to be modalized or modified into the form of the present, which allows itself neither to be fore-seen nor pro-programmed; it is thus also the opening to freedom, responsibility, decision, ethics and politics...’ (Derrida 1992: 200).

‘Essentialism: no one is quite sure what, in essence, it is, but it makes an excellent insult’ (McKenzie Wark, in Uschanov 1996).

Essentialism is one of the central modes of representation. Broadly speaking, it is the notion that some core meaning or identity is determinate and not subject to interpretation. Ronald Inden writes that essentialist ways of seeing tend to ignore the ‘intricacies of agency’ pertinent to the flux and development of any social system (1990: 20). In the context of this discussion, it is seen in attempts to represent different cultures in terms of their essence – Arabs as essentially violent, Indians as essentially lazy, Tibetans as essentially religious, and so on. Ironically, most of the attempts to combat this reductionism too have involved a high degree of essentialism. The debate between essentialism and anti-essentialism is not new. It has become particularly intense in the last two decades, as identity politics has come into focus, in feminist theory and praxis, race and ethnic studies, queer studies, and other critical enterprises. While some entertain the possibility of a thorough anti-essentialism, others, like Martha Nussbaum, argue that legitimate criticisms still leave room for a certain kind of essentialism based on a historically sensitive account of the most basic human needs and functions (see 1992: 202-46). Anti-essentialists, informed by poststructuralist and postmodern theories, rightly implicate essentialism in the representation of the Other and the perpetuation of dominance. Instead of depending upon foundational categories, antiessentialist understandings reconceptualise identity ‘as simultaneously a practice and an effect that is always in the process of being constructed through signifying practices that expel the surplus meanings that would expose the failure of identity as such’ (Doty 1996b: 168).

The alternative offered to un-self-reflexive essentialism is a broadly constructionist approach which sees hitherto natural categories as social constructs and therefore subject to deconstruction and reconstruction. As I shall discuss, the arguments of theorists like Gayatri Spivak (in Landry and Maclean 1999) and Diane Fuss (1989) on the issue is more persuasive. Forms of essentialism are integral and unavoidable even for social constructionism, and therefore, the essentialist/constructionist binary is misleading.

[Essentialism] is most commonly understood as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the ‘whatness’ of a given entity ... Importantly, essentialism is typically defined in opposition to difference. The opposition is a helpful one in that it reminds us that a complex system of cultural, social, psychical, and historical differences, and not a set of pre-existent human essences, position and constitute the subject. However, the binary articulation of

essentialism and difference can also be restrictive, even obfuscating, in that it allows us to ignore or deny the differences within essentialism (Fuss 1989: xi-xii).

We can deploy essentialism as a strategy with interventionary value by being self-reflexive about our construction of essence. This is different from the conventional use of essentialism that ascribes the essence to nature, objectivity, and facts – beyond the realm of interpretation. While challenging the notion of woman as essentially biological, we can continue to speak against gender discrimination by deploying the category of woman based on shared (and differing) experiences. Such an instrumentalist and activist view of essentialism is also taken by many within postcolonial studies.

In colonial and post-colonial contexts, we find essentialism in the reduction of the indigenous people to an ‘essential’ idea of what it means to be ‘native’ – whether African, Chinese, Arabic, or Tibetan. As the earlier discussion of Orientalism pointed out, imperialism drew its strength from representations of natives as quintessentially lazy, ignorant, deceitful, incapable of self-governing, and the native rulers as corrupt and despotic. Therefore, we should not be surprised that the British officials involved during the 1903-04 invasion of Tibet saw it as something welcomed by ‘ordinary’ Tibetans seeking deliverance from their Chinese and monastic overlords. Captain Cecil Rawling in a military report in 1905 wrote: ‘It seems to be the general wish of the inhabitants of that country (Tibet) that they should come under British administration’ (quoted in Lamb 1960: 296). Not very different is Alistair Lamb’s own assessment that ‘when dealing with the primitive peoples of Central Asia, the problem often was not how to expand one’s power but how to prevent its indefinite expansion’ (101). These familiar arguments put the onus of responsibility for imperial expansion on the victims themselves. This is made possible by their essentialist representations as requiring paternal imperialism – a mix of iron fist and velvet glove.

Even the positive images of certain natives – for instance, Tibetans as spiritual and peaceful – feed upon similar dynamics of essentialism and reduction. Often, the oppositional movements have also been caught in the same trap of crude essentialism. What happens is that the nationalist and liberationist movements often ‘write back’ and reduce the colonisers to an essence, simultaneously defining themselves in terms of an ‘authentic’ essence which may deny or invert the values of the ascribed characteristics (Cliff 1996). Mahatma Gandhi and several other Indian nationalists

appropriated the Romanticist notions of the spirituality of ancient Indian ('Hindu') civilisation in order to affirm an essential Indianness. This not only involved caricaturing the West, as Gandhi did in his famous quip to a reporter's question about Western civilisation: 'I think it would be a good idea' (quoted in Guha 1996). Even more dangerous is its facilitative role in defining (national) identity rigidly, often along majoritarian lines. For instance, in India it has facilitated Hindu nationalist rejection of Islam as 'foreign' and Muslims as 'outsiders'. Said has rightly argued against this inversion, suggesting that in post-colonial national states such essences have much to do with the native manipulators and the embattled imperial contexts out of which they came and in which they were felt to be necessary (1994: 16).

While some postcolonial writers and theorists are right to point out the potential danger of locking oneself within a framework set in place by the colonisers, other writers insist that some subversive, empowering force can come from the employment of essentialist strategies (Cliff 1996). Moreover, as Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean put it, one 'cannot simply assert, "I will be anti-essentialist" and make that stick, for you cannot not be an essentialist to some degree. The critique of essentialism is predicated upon essentialism' (1999: 7). Spivak's work (1987, 1990, 1993, 1999) is important in this regard. Adopting and adapting deconstruction specifically for the postcolonial field, she advocates *strategic essentialism* – 'a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest' (Landry and Maclean 1996: 214). The goal of essentialist critique is not the exposure of error, but the interrogation of the essentialist terms. 'In deconstructive critical practices, you have to be aware that you are going to essentialize anyway. So then strategically you can look at essentialisms, not as descriptions of the way things are, but as something that one must adopt to produce a critique of everything' (Spivak 1990: 51). At the same time she warns against the uncritical deployment of strategic essentialism. Often less scrupulous practitioners ignore the element of strategy and treat it as simply yet another justification for essentialism. The fact that there are bound to be disagreements over what is strategic and what is not, what is the right strategy and what is not, does not mean that one stops being constantly critical and reflexive. This awareness is in itself a continuous and important process in challenging essentialism that lies at the heart of practices such as stereotyping and exoticising.

4A.ii. Stereotyping the Other

The term *stereotype* emerged in the late eighteenth century as a technical designation for the casting of multiple papier mache copies of printing type from a paper mache mould. In the early twentieth century social psychologists appropriated it to designate images through which we categorise the world.³ Within cultural studies and postcolonial theory, stereotyping is considered a basic mode of representing the Other. Distinguishing between types and stereotypes, Richard Dyer argues that while the former are essential for the production of meaning, the latter are not unavoidable: while social types tend to be more open and flexible, stereotyping makes fast, firm and separate what is in reality extremely fluid (1993: 12, 16). A stereotype is a one-sided description of a group/culture resulting from the collapsing of complex differences into a simple ‘cardboard cut-out’. What Seymour Gross writes about the images of the ‘Negro’ in American literature holds true for stereotypes in general – they see people as ‘more of a formula than a human being’ (1966: 2). John Griffin (1960) wrote of his initial experiences as a black man⁴: ‘Often times, it’s whites not talking with us, but with the image of us’ (quoted in Cooper 2001). It reduces people to a few, simple characteristics, which are then represented as fixed by nature. ‘Stereotyping reduces, essentialises, naturalises and fixes “difference”’ (Hall 1997b: 257-8). It is about othering within the parameters of sameness, instead of recognising radical alterity.⁵

Stereotypes, however inaccurate, are one form of representation. Like fictions, they are created to serve as substitutions, standing in for real. They are there not to tell it like it is but to invite and encourage pretense. They are a fantasy, a projection onto Other that makes them less threatening. Stereotypes abound when there is distance. They are an invention, a pretense that one knows when the steps that would make real knowing possible cannot be taken – are not allowed (hooks 1992: 341).

As Gilman argues, within stereotypes, the definition of the Other incorporates the basic categories (such as illness, sexuality, and race) by which the self is defined

³ Walter Lippmann, who coined the term in its contemporary sense, viewed it as having four main functions – as an ordering process, as a ‘short cut’, as a reference to the world, and lastly, as expression of our values and manner of thinking (1922). Cognitive theorisation of stereotype is dominant within social psychology (Miller 1982; Oakes et al 1994). For a critique of ignorance social, political and cultural context within social psychology literature, see for instance Sander Gilman (1985) where it is argued that stereotypes reflect certain basic perceptual categories, which are in turn projections of internalised, often repressed, models of the Self and the Other (20-25).

⁴ He is the white author of *Black like me* who darkened his skin so as to experience being black.

⁵ Emmanuel Levinas posits that radical alterity approaches the I (self) in the face of the Other, which as irreducible, ethical alterity, makes the I responsible for the Other (for critical discussion on Levinas and radical alterity, see Bernasconi and Critchley 1991).

(1985: 20-5). Stereotypes function as a marker between norm and deviancy, between in-group and those outside it, between 'us' and 'them'. It classifies people according to a norm and constructs the excluded as the Other. For instance, within the dominant version of multiculturalism discourse in the UK, ethnicising minority groups and 'celebrating diversity' go hand in hand with stereotyping them, while leaving intact whiteness as the norm, the unquestioned, the invisible.⁶ Here 'ethnic' is a label for minorities as if the majority Anglo-Saxon culture is non-ethnic. Thus, stereotypes always carry within their very representation an implicit narrative, which is laden with relations of power. As a signifying practice, stereotyping implicates the subjects of power as well as those who are subjected to it (Hall 1997b: 257-8). As we shall see in the later discussion of chronopolitics as a strategy of representation, stereotyping is accompanied by radical detemporalising: Tibet came to be seen as a possible link to an ancient classical civilisation, to the medieval age, as well as to a future utopia – it is beyond the grid of time.

Stereotyping played a performative part in Orientalism, as the discussion in the previous chapter hinted at. To the Orientalists, the Orient was and is a commodity to be possessed by the West. Therefore, it is seen as something to be studied, dominated, and 'fixed'. Stereotypical images of the Orient's separateness – 'its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability' and of 'Oriental despotism, Oriental splendour, cruelty, sensuality ... promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, intense energy' – are articulated in the arts and other forms of discursive practice (Said 1978: 4, 119-20; Williams and Chrisman 1993: 144). The notion of a timeless quality of the Orient has been a familiar trope; corollary to this is the idea of stagnation, (Oriental) despotism, and the need for an external force to pull the Orient toward progress. While discussing Guillaume Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes*, Anthony Strugnell argues that in Orientalist works

By caricaturing the Asiatic temperament, and settling on it a status of permanent inferiority through the immutable influence of climate, it has been pigeon-holed and set to one side. The other has been stereotyped and neutralised, so that the serious business of trade can be pursued, unaffected by an unsettling encounter with different, complex culture (1996: 176).

⁶ Use of the word 'colour' is significant. Those who are not-white are considered coloured as if white is not a colour! This invisibility of whiteness is 'historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and ...linked to ... relations of domination' (Weis et al. 1997: 22). As Coco Fusco writes, '[t]o ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it. Without specifically addressing white ethnicity, there can be no critical evaluation of the construction of the other' (quoted in hooks 1998: 343).

Imperialism was therefore a civilising mission, the ‘god-given’ duty (and of course the natural right) of the ‘white man’ to bring ‘progress’ to the natives. Stereotyping flourished – the restless, honest, active, exploratory, masculine, enlightened, modern spirit of the ‘white man’ stood in contrast to the laziness, deceit, passivity, fatalism, femininity, backwardness, and traditional spiritlessness of the natives. This was also true in places like Tibet that did not come under direct European colonialism. For instance, as Peter Hansen points out in his study of cinematic representations of Tibet in the early twentieth century, films such as *Climbing Mount Everest* (1922) and *The Epic of Everest* (1924) by Captain John Noel developed the ‘contrast between the extroverted, aggressive, and manly British climbers with the introverted, passive, and squalid but mystical Tibetans’ (Hansen 2001: 92-3).

Thus, stereotyping served imperialism at both representational and psychic levels – supporting the idea of paternal domination and acting as a kind of perceptual blinder protecting the colonisers from discomfiting consciousness of either poverty or guilt (Lebow 1976: 22).⁷ It allowed the participants in the massacre of Tibetans at Guru (31 March 1904) that took place during the British invasion of Tibet to blame it on the ‘crass stupidity and childishness of the Tibetan general’ (Mehra 1968: 223), malevolent monks, superstitious Tibetan soldiers – everyone except themselves.

With almost monotonous regularity colonial natives have been described as indolent and complacent, cowardly but brazenly rash, violent, uncivilised and incapable of hard work. On the more complementary side, they possess a natural talent for song and dance, and frequently are curious, but with a limited attention span. In short, the image of simple creatures in need of paternal domination emerged very clearly (Lebow 1976: 4). This sentiment can be seen in Colonel Francis Younghusband’s account of his

⁷Another strategy to soothe European conscience was to perceive dispossession and genocide as a result of ‘the inevitable march of Western progress’. Providing a ‘progressive’ justification for mass slaughter of native Americans, American president Andrew Jackson said

To follow to the tomb the last of his race and to tread on the graves of extinct nations excite melancholy reflections. But true philanthropy reconciles the mind to these vicissitudes as it does to the extinction of one generation to make room for another ... What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged with a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms [and] occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion (quoted in Shohat and Stam 1994: 86).

‘expedition’ to Lhasa where after criticising Tibetans for being crafty, immoral, over-religious, dirty, and lazy, he says ‘there are in them latent potentialities for good, which only await the right touch to bring them into being’ (1910: 321).

Such colonial stereotypes become self-fulfilling and self-justifying images. They have been part of ‘scientific’ disciplinary endeavours like anthropology as well.

(Traditional anthropology) depicted the colonized as members of a harmonious, internally homogeneous, unchanging culture. When so described, the culture appeared to ‘need’ progress, or economic and moral uplifting. In addition, the ‘timeless traditional culture’ served as a self-congratulatory reference point against which Western civilization could measure its own progressive historical evolution. The civilizing journey was conceived more as a rise than a fall, a process more of elevation than degradation (a long, arduous journey upward, culminating in ‘us’). ... It portrayed a ‘culture’ sufficiently frozen to be an object of ‘scientific’ knowledge. This genre of social description made itself, and the culture so described, into an artefact worthy of being housed in the collection of a major museum (Rosaldo 1989: 31).

Even today, when formal structures of imperial domination have been replaced by an informal neocolonial one, stereotypical images of non-Western people continue to circulate, often buttressing the power relations in place. In the words of Emma Larocque:

Stereotypes have an important function in the maintenance of racism. Between 1500 and 1800 A.D., the stereotype of Indians [, that is native Americans,] as savages served to justify the dispossession of Indian lands. The dispossession and its legacy have created a powerful-powerless relationship between white and Native peoples. In order to maintain this power structure, new stereotypes of Native peoples have been created, as the need has arisen (1989: 74).

Though in everyday conversation we tend to use stereotype only for negative images, stereotyping always has within it dualism and ambivalence (more on this later). According to Peter Hulme there are the two key features of the stereotypical discourse of the Other: several characteristics are collapsed into one simplified figure which represents the *essence* of the people; it is then split into two halves- its ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sides (in Hall 1992: 275-332). Both images serve to buttress imperialist claims in their own ways. As Michael Hunt in his study of hierarchy of race and American foreign policy points out, the Americans created for ‘Orientals’ two distinctly different images: ‘a positive one, appropriate for happy times when paternalism and benevolence were in season, and a negative one, suited to those tense periods when abuse or aggrandizement became the order of the day’ (Hunt 1987: 69). Chow also points out in a slightly different context: ‘Defilement and sanctification belong to the same symbolic order’ (1993: 54). Dualism necessarily leaves scope for some

ambivalence. Therefore, the closure is never complete – stereotyping is not a singular act, but one that necessitates repetition in order to make sense. Homi Bhabha (1983), in his study of the dependence of colonial discourse on the concept of ‘fixity’, rightly points out that stereotype is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always in place and something that must be anxiously repeated. It is this process of ambivalence and its force that gives the colonial stereotype its currency; ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive junctures, produces the effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype must always be in excess of what can be empirically proven.

Stereotyping is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality but because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that denies the play of difference. Let me illustrate this with an example from the story of the first two men to reach Mount Everest – Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary. Reaching the summit, Tenzing Norgay says he felt the warm presence of the mountain, buried an offering to the gods, and said as prayer: ‘I am grateful, Chomolungma’; Hillary took photographs to survey the area, urinated on the summit, and later told one of the other climbers George Lowe: ‘Well, George, we knocked the bastard off’ (Hansen 1998; Outside online 1999). This difference in attitude may be due to cultural factors. But to interpret humility as passivity and fix the identity of Tenzing Norgay (read as representative of sherpas and other natives) as essentially passive in contrast to adventurous, scientific Hillary (read as white man) leads to an arrested and fixated form of representation (excluding those who do not ‘fit’ in the image – women for instance). Stereotyping is not about expressing cultural difference, but fixing it in a pre-given socio-cultural milieu with extreme power differentials. Hence, instead of considering the stereotype as a given, we should interrogate it as a process.

There are various strategies to combat stereotyping. While most have concentrated their energy on challenging the stereotypes, reversing it, or reversing the evaluation of it, these attempts have failed to displace it. The more recent strategies informed by postmodern, poststructuralist and postcolonial sensibilities seem to engage with the issue more effectively. The emphasis is on working with the shifting, unstable nature of meaning, and entering into the struggle over representation, while acknowledging that since meaning can never be finally fixed, there can never be final victories (Hall 1997b: 270-6). The study of Orientalist works will help us understand how the West

has perceived the Other, but we cannot stop there. The challenge is to deconstruct Orientalist ideas about otherness because ‘the very appropriation of the Other for the West’s own purposes of self-criticism [will only continue the] propagation of racial and ethnic stereotypes’ (Locke 1991). It should be seen as a part of wider need to decentre and deconstruct traditional foundations of thought regarding culture, language, and subjectivity. The goal of studying stereotypes, according to Gilman, is not to stop production of images of the Other, images that demean and by demeaning, control; ‘this would be the task of Sisyphus’ (1985: 240). It is to engage with stereotypes – their operationality, their impact, and the values attached to them.

Such strategies do not belittle sincere attempts by minority groups to challenge their negative stereotypes and project a more positive image. All it warns against is being caught in the bind of stereotyping instead of attempting to displace it. This problem is particularly acute for those groups whose stereotypical image is a positive one. While it is difficult to combat negative stereotypes, it is more difficult to engage with positive ones. While in the short run, a positive stereotype may be politically and socially helpful for a group, in the long run it becomes reified, imprisoning the subjects in their own arrested image. This problem can be seen most clearly in the case of Tibetans who seem to be prisoners of their stereotyped images. Alluding to the real effects of the language of stereotype about Tibet, Donald Lopez points out that it ‘not only creates knowledge about Tibet, in many ways it creates Tibet, a Tibet that Tibetans in exile have come to appropriate and deploy in an effort to gain both standing in exile and independence for their country’ (1998: 10). However, these stereotypes legitimise only certain goals and actions geared toward achieving them – the prevalent stereotypes paint Tibetans mainly as passive victims requiring outside help. And this outside support comes at a price. As Jamyang Norbu points out, ‘The national struggle for an independent Tibet has been replaced by a squishy agenda of environmental, pacifistic, spiritual, and “universal” concerns that has little or nothing to do with Tibet’s real problems’ (1998: 22).

4A.iii. Exoticism as exoticising

‘Knowledge is incompatible with exoticism, but lack of knowledge is in turn irreconcilable with praise of others; yet praise without knowledge is precisely what exoticism aspires to be. This is its constitutive paradox’ (Tzvetan Todorov 1993: 265).

exotic A. *adj.* i. Belonging to another country, foreign, alien; not indigenous; extrinsic (obsolete). ii. Of or pertaining to, or characteristic of a foreigner, or what is foreign (now *rare*); hence, outlandish, barbarous, strange, uncouth. Also, having attraction of the strange or foreign, glamorous; *spec.* of or pertaining to strip-tease. Orig. *U.S.*

B. *sb.* i. A plant, formerly also an animal, of foreign attraction; in popular language, a foreign plant not acclimatized or naturalized. ii. A person of foreign origin; a foreigner (*rare*)

exoticism [f. exotic a + -ism] a. Tendency to adopt what is exotic or foreign.

b. Exotic character; an instance of this, anything exotic.

exotism [ad. Fr. *Exotisme*, f. *exotique*; see EXOTIC and -ISM] Resemblance to what is foreign; a foreign 'air'.

(OED 1989: 551-2)

Tibetans are exoticised as positively different, and for the continued support from consumers of such images, they have to maintain, assert, and often create these differences. The 'exotic' here becomes a prisoner of exoticism, which in turn seeks to commodify and depoliticise history, culture, and agency. Therefore, 'to allow Tibet to circulate in a system of fantastic opposites (even when the Tibetans are the "good" Orientals) is to deny Tibet its history, to exclude it from a real world of which it has always been a part, and to deny Tibetans their agency in the creation of a contested quotidian reality' (Lopez 1998: 11). We can therefore appreciate Norbu's exasperation: 'however hopeless their cause or marginal their survival, Tibetans are better off living their own reality than being typecast in ethereal roles in the fantasies of the West' (2001: 378). As the ensuing discussion clarifies, exoticism is no benign phenomenon. It has been an integral part of Orientalism as much as stereotyping and essentialism. Rather than taking exoticism as a substantive (noun), I prefer to look at it as a continuous process of exoticisation, as a verb.

The definitions of exotic and exoticism are essentially posited on difference, what is 'not me'. In Western tradition it was first applied specifically to flora and fauna that came from far away. The first recorded use of the word was in French by Francois Rabelais (1548) and in English by Ben Johnson (1599). It has always had to do with difference and strangeness. The concept of there being some exotic land/people is not peculiar to Western history. In fact, before modern times, European places were as exotic for India and China as the latter were for the former. Exoticism, then, was reversible. It would be reversible today also *if* the exotic relations were to be an encounter of strong differences in a non-centred place. But this is not the case. Even

though a general concept of the exotic exists in all cultures, these are very different from the representational strategy of exoticism.

Charles Bell (1928) mentions a Tibetan book of geography written about the middle of the nineteenth century (*dzam-ling Gye-she Me-long* - 'the mirror that shows the extent of the world') which has fanciful statements about other lands – of Corsica, it says that 'the dogs of this country are so large that people can ride them'. Of Sicily, that 'there is a high mountain; from among its rocks a big fire comes out. This goes to the ocean and returns to rocks. It does not burn grass or trees; but burns gold, silver, copper and human beings. And there is a certain kind of grass, which grows in no other place. If a man eats it, he dies of laughter'. Bell then concludes, 'Tibetans like miraculous interpretations; it is a trait deep down in their nature' (1928: 8). But it is not different from Europeans writing fantastical tales about Tibet before and during the nineteenth century. Tibet was invested with all sorts of fantasies and absurdities not only by romanticists but also by 'rationalists – it allowed suspension of Enlightenment rationalism and the possibility for anything goes. This sense of the absurd was revealed in a story of a 1888 border skirmish when British troops nervously fired a volley into a patch of giant rhubarb plants, mistaking them for Tibetan soldiers (Freshfield cited in Bishop 1989: 153). When natives engage in fantasies, it is because they are naturally predisposed to irrational superstition; if the colonialists do it, they are romantic!

In the mode of exoticism, the Other can only be perceived in a hierarchy. 'Given the usual esteem within which the self is constituted, the exoticising of the Other almost invariably amounts to the constitution of that Other as a less-than-equal subject' (Shapiro 1988: 100). This idea has been put succinctly by Johannes Fabian: '(O)ur ways of making the Other are ways of making ourselves. The need to go *there* (to the exotic places, be they far away or around the corner) is really our desire to be *here* (to find or defend our position in the world)' (1990: 756). We can therefore see that in Western popular works, an image of the West is mirrored in the image of Tibet: for Arthur Conan Doyle,⁸ Tibet's remoteness (absence) defines Europe's centrality and its

⁸ Due to popular demand, Conan Doyle resurrected Sherlock Holmes (who had perished at the Reichenbach falls). In 'The empty house (Return of Sherlock Holmes)', the great detective announces to his stunned companion Dr Watson: 'I travelled for two years in Tibet, therefore, and amused myself by visiting Lhasa and spending some days with the head Lama. You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian named Sigerson, but I am sure that it

familiarity; Rider Haggard's Tibet⁹ (place of promise and transcendence) underlines Western prosaicness; Walter Benjamin¹⁰ evokes Tibet in a criticism of Western bourgeois disenchantment (enigmatic and imaginatively bold); Antonin Artaud's Tibet¹¹ (land of benevolent father) stands in contrast to the West's spiritual contamination, suffering, ignorance (Bishop 1993: 14-15).¹²

The genericness of exoticism evaporated and its theoretical reversibility ended gradually with European expansion and the consolidation of colonial rules. An exploring/conquering/cataloguing impulse converged with the material capacity of

never occurred to you that you were receiving news of your friend' (Doyle 1974). Interestingly, in his original edition, Conan Doyle mis-spelt 'Lama' as 'Llama' (Booth 2000). During the turn of the nineteenth-twentieth century, it was common to substitute the 'elusive' Dalai Lama for llama, a south American animal – showing how in the imperial imagination, specificity had very little role to play. On 4 April 1904, the *Daily Illustrated Mirror* had a cartoon of a lion and a llama with comments about how 'silly' the llama is and how it will 'greatly grieve the lion if the llama continue to harden its heart, for the lion does really not want to fight' (Carrington 1998: 19). In the same year, an issue of *Punch* showed the British lion with a Tibetan 'llama': while the lion holds a copy of the Anglo-Tibetan Treaty and catches the llama by its tail, on the background is the Grand Lama's door with a sign 'OUT Back in Three Years' (Llama Trivia n.d.) (alluding to the Dalai Lama who fled Lhasa immediately before British arrival). The basic fact that the 'one-l' lama is from Tibet while the 'double-l' llama is from South America escaped the British writers and illustrators (For an interesting fictional narrative of Holmes' missing 'two years', see Norbu 1999a).

⁹ Rider Haggard achieved success with *She* (Haggard 1995) where Ayesha – 'She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed' – the '*beautiful white woman*' (17, emphasis in original) ruler/divinity of a lost civilisation in 'darkest Africa', is kept alive for five hundred years by dips in the Fire of Life, but overdoses for the sake of her English lover and perishes. In the sequel *Ayesha, the Return of She*, he resurrects the figure at a monastery in Tibet where benighted natives once more worship her – this time the natives are Tibetans (Norbu 1998: 18).

¹⁰ In the middle of his 1929 essay on surrealism, Walter Benjamin (an influential Marxist critic) briefly, but dramatically, tells of his encounter with some Tibetan lamas who were staying in the same hotel as him in Moscow and always left the doors ajar; he writes that 'I found out that in these rooms lived members of a sect who had sworn never to occupy closed rooms' (quoted in Bishop 1993: 14). It marked a significant surreal moment for him, evoking an exotic Tibet still full of magical possibilities, still free from modern forces.

¹¹ Antonin Artuad, a famous French poet, actor, and director, wrote in his 'Address to the Dalai Lama' in 1925: 'We are your most faithful servants, O Grand Lama, give us, grace us with your illuminations in a language our contaminated European minds can understand, and if need be, transform our Mind, create for us a mind turned entirely toward those perfect summits where the Human Mind no longer suffers' (Artuad 1965: 64). Of course the address was for European audience and I have not come across any reference to any attempt made to deliver the 'message' to the Dalai Lama.

¹² In his article on Lithuanian writer Jurga Ivanauskaite, Howard Jarvis points out how Tibet is seen as a possible 'mirror of Lithuania':

The subject of Tibet chimes well with both the Lithuanian character and the Lithuanian experience. The idea of a distant mountain kingdom relates to the romantic ideals of the Lithuanian character, while its fate of invasion and exile relates directly to Lithuanian memories of occupation and harsh, often religious, prosecution. Lithuania was the only former Soviet republic with a majority Catholic population, and priests were dealt with particularly severely (Jarvis 2000).

enact this impulse as Western imperialism became the hegemony. As Jean-Marc Moura points out, 'From the end of the fifteenth to twentieth centuries...the exotic dream is profoundly influenced by the advances and the retreats of colonialism' (quoted in Ha 2000:7). Exoticism, since then, became a mode in which strangeness has been translated for the West. Chris Bongie defines exoticism¹³ 'as a discursive practice intent on recovering "elsewhere" values "lost" with the modernization of *European* society' (1991: 5, emphasis added). In modern times, it is only the West, which has the power to *enact* its representational strategies on the planetary level.

Using exoticism as a critical tool rather than an object of study, Roger Celestin (1996) argues that the best way to understand it is in terms of a triangular relation between the (Western) Self and the (exotic) Other that is fluctuatingly tenuous or strong depending on the narrating subject's position vis-à-vis a point of departure (and return) – home, centre, and audience. Exoticisers (those who exoticise) do not opt for extremes of exemplification (completely effacing the exotic) or experimentation (disappearing from the home and going completely 'native'). Rather they use exoticism both to interrogate dominant discourses of home and to negotiate a tension between home and the exotic. As Docteur A. D'Arsonval says in his introduction to Alexandra David-Neel's *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet*, she 'has become a complete "Asiatic", a complete Tibetan, and yet has remained a Westerner, a disciple of Descartes...as she observed everything in Tibet in a free and impartial spirit' (David-Neel 1936: v-vi).

The general rhetorical and poetic network of exoticism, which is always present but shifts according to the workings of a triangular relation at different historical and cultural moments, is formed by different figures and motifs. These figures and motifs, such as the Wise Persian, the Mysterious Orient, the Dark Continent, are protean in form, as our discussion later in this chapter and in the next chapter will show. Desire/nostalgia for a utopia (to come) or a (lost) paradise; yearning for a sort of prelinguistic peace (the origin of the noble savage); the need to affirm the same as the centre through the exoticising of an outside; the common past of humanity; the rite-of-

¹³ Further he distinguishes between imperialist exoticism (directly serving colonisation) and exoticising exoticism (individual acts that did not explicitly serve imperial state interests): 'whereas imperialist exoticism affirms the hegemony of modern civilization over less developed, savage territories, exoticizing exoticism privileges those very territories and their peoples, figuring them as a possible refuge from an overbearing modernity' (Bongie 1991: 17).

passage syndrome; striating the globe as antidote to existential anguish: all these can be added under the heading of causal properties to the figures and motifs of exoticism (Celestin 1996: 22).

While some see Tibet as offering the possibility of a utopia in the future (see Redfield 1999), others have invested in it their nostalgia for a simple past. The latter sentiment is pervasive in many travel writings. To give one example, F. Spencer Chapman in his account of Lhasa in the 1930s wrote:

On the whole, the administration of Lhasa, though corrupt, is efficient...Tibet is in the position of European countries in the Middle Ages – in many ways *a position which we are bound, nowadays, to envy*. The country is run by the monasteries and by the noble families. If the son of a merchant or farmer is ambitious he enters a monastery, for only there can hope to rise to that position of importance to which he is entitled. But there is no unemployment, no underlying feeling of insecurity, and except for those who choose begging as a profession – no real poverty (1992: 92-3; emphasis added).

The boundary of Tibet was seen as a threshold to a place set apart – both in time and space. The longing glimpse from the edge, a sacred revelation at the border, seems to belong to travel accounts about Tibet written by Westerners (Bishop 1997: 58). Crossing the border is seen as a rite of passage and the myth that crossing the boundary of Tibet would bring about a kind of spiritual transformation is widely prevalent (see McMillin 1999). This idea of entry into a different world, both in time and space, is an integral part of the exoticising process.

The exotic, thus is not the complete Other; it is an acceptable, complementary, renewing Other. In this sense it is slightly different from the concept of ‘Other’ (see Levinas 1987, 1999), for this Other has a voice, a radical alterity. On the other hand, in a certain sense, ‘the Exotic is dumb because it is the Pseudo-Exotic’ (Mason 1998: 6) as it is never actually encountered but produced inside the discourse of representation. Thus it is a mediating entity.

Exoticism is less about the exotic and more about discursive practices and representational regimes within the exoticising culture. The exotic itself does not exist prior to its ‘discovery’ but is produced through it. To illustrate using the Western exoticisation of Tibet, it made very little sense to speak of Tibet as an exotic land before the eighteenth century. It was only when the attention of adventurers, travellers, philosophers, and imperial officials shifted towards Tibet during the nineteenth

century that it emerged as exotic. Tibet was estranged as exotic only after some Westerners started to invest their desires and curiosity in the idea of 'Tibet'.

This approach lends itself to a questioning of the basis and workings of representation itself and its connection to power. Recognition of the exotic as a product of exoticisation calls for a 'shift of attention from the geographic or cultural provenance of the exotic to the modalities by which the exotic is produced in the West' (Mason 1998: 3). There is recognition of an ever-present *audience* in exoticism. 'Isn't exoticism primarily a phenomenon of reception?' says Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine (quoted in Bohrer 1998: 354). This explains why those who never leave their home practise exoticism as a strategy too. Drawing upon an existing repertory of images, the 'sociolect reservoir' (Mullen 1995), those engaged work within mythologies about the 'alien' which they have inherited, and which they then modify and augment (Rousseau and Potter 1990: 9). It therefore comes as no surprise that James Hilton, the creator of the term 'Shangri-la' (that has come to be inextricably associated with Tibet ever since) in his *Lost horizon* (1933) had never visited Tibet.

The exotic therefore largely existed as a mode of self-definition for the Western writers and exoticisers. As a technology of representation, exoticism is self-empowering, self-referential even, insofar as the objects of its gaze are not supposed to look back (Root 1996: 45). Sometimes it functioned as a mode of escapism and at other times provided a fertile base for philosophical, religious, and literary speculation. The former can be seen in most of the travel writings and fictions about Tibet¹⁴ while the latter can be seen in works of theosophists, New Age gurus, as well as Buddhist scholars.

There is an argument that there was nothing inherently imperialist and political about Western practices of exoticism. Louis Malleret reminds his readers that 'while it may be hard to conceive of a colonial literature that is not "exotic", one has to recognize that now all literatures with an exotic impression have a colonial cachet' (quoted in Ha 2000: 7). Often those who write of the exotic as otherness regard it as embodying idealised alternatives to the self. Talking about romanticism and India, Dorothy Figueira argues that though romanticists did 'appropriate' rather than 'understand'

¹⁴ Amaury De Riencourt noted that escapism has been at the root of West's fascination with

India, their aims were often contestory rather than conservative, and the appropriation was a part of negotiating the polarities of self-consciousness: 'The European either was genuinely trying to understand rather than repress cultural difference, or, in fact, attempted to do both' (1994: 10-11). Then the exotic becomes associated with desire, with a sense of the imperfect or the incomplete self. Exoticism served as a device for internal criticism.

This, however, does not deny the fact that exoticism as a representational practice was very much implicated into the European will to power through imperialism. 'The exoticist rhetoric of fetishised otherness and sympathetic identification masks the inequality of the power relations without which the discourse could not function' (Huggan 2001: 14). The differing, and even noble intentions of some of those who practised exoticism does not deny the fact that their impact on the exotic was often predictably the same – a prelude to control, dominance and exploitation. Escapism, critique of home society and speculation also provided legitimisation for European imperialism. The intention of practitioners does not undermine the criticism of exoticism as a practice closely linked with imperialism. Imperialism is a historically crucial process by which an Other is conceived as exotic is represented and subordinated for the purpose of strengthening the worldly place of a metropolitan nation-state. In the colonial period exoticism was the 'aestheticizing means by which the pain of that expansion is converted to spectacle, to render culture in the service of empire, even as it may also act to change the originating national culture' (Arac and Ritvo 1991: 3). Exoticism functions in a variety of imperial contexts as a mechanism of aesthetic substitution which 'replaces the impress of power with the blandishments of curiosity' (Said 1993: 159).

Even today exoticism is very much alive and it is naïve to believe that this is unmediated by relations of power. Yes, exoticism now has shifted to an increasingly global mode of mass-market consumption – 'suitable for all markets and at the limits of its own semantic dispersion' (Gallini, quoted in Huggan 2001: 15). But inequalities persist. Continuities can be seen in terms of 'aesthetics of decontextualisation', that is diversion of commodities from their original cultural nexus, and 'commodity fetishism', that is the veiling of the material circumstances under which commodities

Tibet (1950: 5-6).

are produced and consumed (Huggan 2001: 16-8). As our later discussion of the impact of Exotica Tibet on the Tibetan people will highlight, just like the exoticism of colonial times, New Age exoticism¹⁵ reifies cultures and treats them ahistorically. Far from being specimens of radical otherness, non-Western representation in museums, exhibitions, festivals, and the like are carefully filtered to fit Western needs and performance constraints. Tribal craftspeople often change their production, in colour, shape, design, and so on, to fulfil the demands of Western buyers. To cite an example from the Tibetan case, performances of the Tibetan devil dance (*cham*) traditionally took place for days at a stretch. But the *cham* performances by Tibetan artists in the Western countries now are shortened to around two hours so as to suit the audience's taste (Schrempf 1997). The change, in response to the demands of tourism industry, is seen both inside Tibet and in the refugee settlements.

Pervasive here is the operation of power. The East is far from an equal. As Frederick Bohrer points out, many exoticist activities

depend on an unreflexive ideal of authenticity, in which the signifiers within the given field are taken as homologous to their external referent. As considerable recent work in a number of fields has shown, the limpid, unmediated ideal required by mimesis to accept texts or artefacts as perfectly authentic or true to their subject, is far from a given, but rather is bound in the metaphysical (and geo-political) conceits of a unique historical moment. In particular, mimeticism's vaunted fidelity between sign and referent is the product of a certain hierarchical enforcement of appearance and evaluation as much as of any 'natural' or instantaneous resemblance. To contextualize exoticism as representational process ... is to work toward two goals. First, it is to work toward restoring the temporalization of the process, to view further the work of agency and contexts in exoticist representation. Second, in a way that has been barely broached in exoticist and post-colonial studies, it is also to offer a broader perspective on the nature of exoticism, noting especially the central role of history in its representation (Bohrer 1996: 293-307).

In the contemporary neo/post colonial world, while there is an increasing recognition of the complicity of Orientalism, exoticism, and other representational systems with imperialism and racism, exoticism continues in the form of new avatars. However, the avatar is not an exact replica. There are significant changes. Cultural and commercial commodification seems to be the driving force now. Another change is that the exoticised are not bereft of all agencies. Often, they deploy their exotic image to fulfil their economic and political interests. An example of the former is Indians in the UK opening restaurants with names evoking nostalgia for the British Raj. In the Tibetan

¹⁵ Nicholas Thomas prefers to call it New Age Primitivism as according to him exoticism is an indicator of mere difference while primitivism is the mode of representing inversion in colonial

case, the situation is slightly different. At the micro level, individual Tibetans make their living by selling ‘authentic’ Tibetan commodities. At a macro level, there is a conscious policy of the diaspora elite to gain political support from Westerners by imaging (and imagining) Tibetanness to suit the tastes of the audience, much of which still cherishes an exoticised image of Tibet as a land of peace, spirituality and harmony.

Exotica Tibet as an Orientalist construct is a product of modes of representation including essentialism, stereotyping, and exoticising. Also involved are various specific techniques, or strategies, that are generic to other imaginative practices through which the West imposed its representations on its Others with real effects. I turn now to these strategies.

4B. Strategies and techniques of representation

Complexity, oppositionality, and ambivalence lie at the heart of Orientalist projects like Exotica Tibet. Imaginative practices through which the West came to represent the Other can be interrogated through the various representational strategies involved. Though there is always a will to reify the represented, this is undermined by the nature of representation – it is not a singular act, but one necessitating repetition. As the discussion in the previous chapter pointed out, since representation is the act of representing – making something present that is literally absent – there is always ambiguity and ambivalence. This leaves room for contestation and alternative representations: ‘there are no relations of power without resistance’ (Foucault 1980: 142). ‘Orientals’ are transparent and yet they are inscrutable; the Orient provokes desire and yet it is repugnant. There always is a paradox in the Western representations of other cultures – an unresolvable tension between transparency and inscrutability, desire and disavowal, difference and familiarity. Therefore Exotica Tibet is not a distinct phenomenon devoid of contrariety; rather, it is defined by a ‘true *complexio oppositorum*, a rich complexity of contradictions and oppositions’ (Bishop 1989: 63). Hugues Didier, when discussing the *tibétophilie européenne* emerging before nineteenth century, points out that it is founded upon two poles: ‘On the one hand, Tibet is the least accessible, most mysterious, and most foreign country of Asia;

times (1994: 4).

on the other hand, Tibet is paradoxically the only Asian culture with whom Europeans can identify so much that they seem surprisingly intimate and related – truly a sort of *coincidentia oppositorum!*’ (Kaschewsky 2001: 6-7). So near, yet so far!

It is complexity and indeterminacy not simplicity and determinacy that characterise the amalgam of various representational strategies. To highlight this, I shall twin some of the seemingly opposite strategies and underline that the twins operate through imaginative practices, sometimes in contradictory ways. The strategies will be discussed under the headings *archive*, *gaze*, *differentiation-identification*, *debasement-idealisation*, *eroticisation-moralisation*, *chronopolitics*, *infantilisation-gerontification*, *naturalisation*, and *self-affirmation-self-criticism*.

4B.i. Archive

As Derrida says,¹⁶ ‘[n]othing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word “archive”’ (quoted in Featherstone 2000: 162). Archive is commonly understood as a place or collection containing records, documents, photographs, film, or other materials of historical interest. But, ‘archives are as much products of historical struggle as they are primary sources for writing histories’ (Lynch 1999: 67). ‘The archive contains primary sources, at the same time that it is always already a secondary trace of historical discourse’ (Dirks 2001: 195). ‘Archive’ can be taken to refer to a repository of stored memories or information.¹⁷ ‘The archive is also a place of dreams’ (Steedman 1998: 67).¹⁸

¹⁶ In his *Archive fever*, Jacques Derrida points out the multiplicity of ways in which the archive (the entire archive-complex including archive, archivisation, archivability, de-archivisation) is constructive of the very event that it allegedly ‘records’: ‘the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event’ (1995: 17).

¹⁷ As Harriet Bradley writes, the ‘archive is the repository of memories: individual and collective, official and unofficial, licit and illicit, legitimating and subversive’ (1999: 108).

¹⁸ For Michel Foucault, ‘archive’ is essential to any ‘archaeology of knowledge’. It is ‘the general system of the formation and transformation of statements’ (1972: 130) existing at a given period within a particular society. This archive determines both the system of enunciability of a statement-event and its system of functioning in other words it constitutes the site of rules which define the limits and forms of (i) expressibility, (ii) conservation, (iii) memory, (iv) reactivation, (v) appropriation (Smart 1988: 48). Thus, Foucault stresses that archive is composed of multiple and varying discourses, it is not, a limiting or constraining

Representations of other cultures draw upon archives in both senses of the term. During the Victorian age the 'archive was not a building nor even a collection of texts but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master pattern, a virtual focal point for the heterogeneous local knowledges of metropole and empire' (Richards 1992: 104). What was knowable then was shaped by imperial prerogatives as well as pre-existing 'knowledge'. This included those found in classical writings, religious and biblical sources, mythology, traveller's tales (which in any case made little distinction between description and legend), and fictional writings. These provided the cultural framework through which others were seen, described and represented.

Let me briefly illustrate this with some comments on Christopher Columbus's encounter with the Native Americans/Amerindians. Instead of being an encounter with radical otherness, it drew upon an already existing archive of images, preconceptions, and representations. Columbus 'did not discover a world as it existed in itself; nor could he have. He discovered a world of otherness, a world of promise and danger, utopian bliss and barbaric cruelty, innocence and corruption, simplicity and mystery, all filtered through a late medieval culture of perceptions, conceptions, aspirations, faiths, anxieties, and demands. His discovery was an encounter...' (Connolly 1991: 36). In a similar tone, Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney write that Columbus 'does not really see the Amerindians; instead, he engages them as merely a category of otherness as revealed in the authoritative texts with which he is familiar' (1996: 74). These authoritative texts included books like *The book of Marco Polo*, Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago mundi*, Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis*, and *The travels of Sir John Mandeville*, all of which masqueraded as travel adventures. Unsurprisingly then,

Columbus *had* to meet the cannibals. Pliny and Mandeville had already forewarned him ... Europe needed cannibals; and the little fact that not a single sighting of a cannibal in action had ever been made was not going to stand in its way. It invented them; and then used them as a justification for a range of purposes (Sardar 1992: 500-01).

Often visions about one 'Oriental' culture were unproblematically invested into another. Orientalism itself performed an archival function – generalisations abounded as the attitude was 'pick an East, any East' (Sardar 1999: 66) and the story will be the same. As Said puts it:

formation but an enabling system of rules which is never entirely complete and which is

In a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective. These ideas explained the behavior of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics (1978: 41-2).

In situations where the culture was relatively unknown – like the Tibetan – hearsay, legends, and fantasies performed an ever more important archival function.¹⁹ Representers of Tibet especially before the nineteenth century often drew upon these archives, supplementing the rare missionary and travellers' accounts. Hugh Richardson's argument that the early allusions of Westerners reveal little more than that the Tibetans had a reputation in neighbouring countries for 'strange ways and rare magical powers' (1962: 61) holds true even for the twentieth century.

The fantastic has always been a part of image/knowledge about Tibet: works have drawn upon an archive of pre-existing representations. First contact between British and Tibetans was made in the late eighteenth century. Letters and gifts from the Panchen Lama (referred to by contemporary writings as Teshoo or Tashi Lama) to Warren Hastings both before and after the first British mission to Tibet (under George Bogle)²⁰ in 1774-75 did not fall into an imaginative vacuum. Indeed, they activated ancient rumours and vague fragments of knowledge that had been steadily accumulating over the centuries (Bishop 1989: 29). It seems that the ancient Greeks had heard rumours about Tibet too. In 1924, Charles Bell mentioned that Herodotus' account refers to a rumour about a race of enormous ants that delved for gold in a country north-west of India (Sharma and Sharma 1996: 83-4). Ptolemy spoke of the

therefore open to change (McNay 1994: 67).

¹⁹ Rumour and gossip also had direct political implications. For instance, British Viceroy in India, Lord Curzon's insistence on sending an expedition to Tibet was fuelled by bazaar gossip and rumours about activities of Buriyat monk Dorjjeff (considered as Russian spy) and a Sino-Russian deal (on Tibet) around the summer of 1902. The Viceroy himself said: 'I am myself a firm believer in the existence of a secret understanding, if not a secret treaty' (Mehra 1968: 151). Interestingly, the scare of a Russian intrigue died out soon as there was no evidence of substantial Russian secret activities in Tibet. But it did play an important role in changing radically the political landscape in which Tibet operated as modern Western ideas of international relations made a forceful entry.

²⁰ Warren Hastings commissioned George Bogle to explore the prospect for trade, get some 'curiosities', and gather more information. In addition, he provided Bogle with a historical memorandum (based on available sources) written by himself, where apart from other things, he mentions: 'It is said that in Tibet it is very common for one lady to have several husbands. I should wish to know if this practice obtains in all ranks of society, and whether those husbands who all have intercourse with one woman have not likewise other women that are their wives, with whom likewise they hold an intercourse in common' (Bernstein 2000).

nation of the *Dabasa*, which may be a Roman transliteration of the modern province of U in central Tibet and also referred to ants that were gold diggers (Francke 1907: 14-16). Franciscan Friar William in his *Journeys to the Eastern Parts of the World* during the mid thirteenth century was the first to make reference to ‘incarnate lamas’ and all he said about the Tibetans was that they ‘were held an abomination among all nations’ because of a habit they once had of eating their parents upon death (MacGregor 1970: 15). At the end of the thirteenth century Franciscan ascetic Odorico of Pordenone went East and wrote the following account about Tibet (it is doubtful if he even travelled across it): women have ‘a couple of tusks as long as those of wild boars’, and to pay respect to his dead father, a son after rituals ‘takes his father’s head, and straightaway cooks it and eats it’ (*Ibid.*: 20). The legendary traveller Marco Polo (1958) too refers to ‘Tebet’ (*sic*) in late thirteenth century. Apart from other things (such as cannibalising of human beings put to death by the authorities, ‘canes of immense size and girth’, natives as idolators and ‘out-and-out bad’ [79-80, 142, 144]), Marco Polo fetishises Asian promiscuity. He stresses on marriage custom where ‘no man would ever on any account take a virgin to wife’ for ‘a woman is worthless unless she has had knowledge of many men’, and therefore Tibetans offer their women to travellers to ‘lie with them’ and thus make them fit for marriage (but once is marriage takes place, it is a ‘grave offence for any man to touch another’s wife’) (142-3). He jokes: ‘Obviously the country is a fine one to visit for a lad from sixteen to twenty-four’ (144).

While early missionaries’ main interest in Tibet was to find traces of Christianity, by the seventeenth century there was a realisation that though there might be similarities between Tibetan religion and Catholicism, Tibetans were not Christians. Portuguese merchant Diogo d’Almeida was probably the first to mention the word ‘lama’ in the Western vocabulary (Richardson 1988: 23). While some missionaries – for instance Jesuits Stephen Cacella and John Cabral in the early seventeenth century and Ippolito Desideri in the early eighteenth century – were more open-minded, others like Johann Grueber and Albert D’Orville in the early seventeenth century and the Capuchin missionaries (early eighteenth century) were less accommodating. Grueber and D’Orville, the first Europeans to visit Lhasa, declined to meet the Dalai Lama, describing him as ‘that devilish god the father who puts to death those who refuse to adore him’ (Richardson 1988: 23). In 1762, Italian Capuchin Antonio Giorgi published *Alphabetum Tibetanum Missionum Apostolicarum* (a Latin-Tibetan

dictionary of 35,000 words) based on the works of Capuchin Father Francesco Orazio della Penna (who lived and studied in Tibet from 1716-1732). Here he collected ‘facts’ and ‘myths’ about Tibet and in his equation of some Tibetan gods with ancient Egyptian gods, one can see the beginning of a view, which later became an essential part of Exotica Tibet, of ‘Tibet as a secret abode of prolific syncretism’ (Kaschewsky 2001: 18). While George Bogle and Samuel Turner headed two British missions to Tibet toward the end of the eighteenth century, in 1811 Thomas Manning went to Lhasa in a personal capacity (Markham 1876). The only other foreigners to stay in Lhasa during the entire nineteenth century were French Lazarist missionaries Evariste Regis Huc and Joseph Gabet. The fact that Tibet was closed to foreigners led to Europeans investing even more fantasies in Tibet. It also led to a ‘race for Lhasa’,²¹ competition among the explorers and adventurers to be the first into the ‘Forbidden City’.

The paucity of first hand accounts until the beginning of the twentieth century did not mean the absence of Tibet (and its ‘Grand Lama’) from the Western *thought-scape*. Rather, it allowed the investment of all sorts of fantasies and negative evaluation into the idea of Tibet. Honore de Balzac made an indirect reference in the novel *Old Goriot* (1835) when he talked of ‘a kind of involuntary, mechanical, and instinctive reverence for the *Grand Lama* of every Ministry’ (Bishop 2001: 205, emphasis added by Bishop), using Grand Lama as a metaphor for absolute executive power. Earlier in 1762 Jean-Jacques Rousseau had criticised Tibetan religion as the ‘religion of the priest’ (Lopez 1998: 23). Johann Herder called Tibetans ‘a rough mountain people, whose religion is both inhumane and intransigent’, while for Immanuel Kant Tibetan

²¹ Who would count as competitors in this race was of course to be decided by the British. Native explorers and spies (known as pundits) like Sarat Chandra Das who managed to reach Lhasa and made geographical mapping of Tibet possible were ineligible, even though they too had to travel in disguise, either because native surveyors ‘become so engrossed with the details of their work that they forget to use their eyes and make those general observations on the people and the scenery about them which is a most important objective of their journeying’ (Holdich 1906: 233) or because ‘suffering from the limitations of disguise and the need to move principally among the lower orders of society, [they] produced more valuable reports on topography and communications than on social, economic, and political conditions in Tibet’ (Richardson 1962: 74) or simply because ‘it was easier for the Asiatics and therefore the race was among the Europeans’ (Hopkirk 1983: 157). This comes as no surprise because in the imperialist imagination, exploration was a possession of *civilised man*. In his biography of Richard Francis Burton, Byron Farwell (1963) begins by stating that “‘the explorer is always a civilized man; exploration is an advanced intellectual concept”. Therefore, he argues, it is a concept unknown to primitive peoples, and one that remains incomprehensible to women’ (Kabbani 1986: 86).

religion was the religion of mystics, pantheists, and fanatics (Rinpoche 2001: 381). Using Giorgi's *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, Kant (1795) does conjecture that if certain aspects of Greek mysticism grew from what he thought were similar Tibetan notions and posits, then there might have been an early traffic between Europe and China through Tibet.²²

Thus, we see that evaluation of Tibet and its people was based on an archive that made very little distinction between myths, legends, hearsay, and facts. Western writers constructed 'facts' not by referring to the place of Tibet but through repetition and cross-reference. There were only three European works on Tibetan Buddhism before 1895 – Giorgi's *Alphabetum Tibetanum* (1762), C. F. Koppen's *Die Lamaische Hierarchie und Kirche* (1859) and Emil Schlagintweit's *Buddhism in Tibet* (1863) – all were compilations by authors who had never been in contact with Tibetans. In 1895 L. Austine Waddell, who went on to become the 'authority par excellence' on Tibet, published his *Tibetan Buddhism* (1972) based on known 'facts' and interaction with some Tibetan Buddhists on the Indian border. The conclusion of his 'scientific' study would come as a shock to a contemporary audience, which is used to seeing Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama in a positive light:

[W]ith all their strivings and the costly services of their priests, the Tibetans never attain peace of mind. They have fallen under the double ban of menacing demons and despotic priests. So it will be a happy day, indeed, for Tibet when its sturdy overcredulous people are freed from the intolerable tyranny of the Lāmas, and delivered from the devils whose ferocity and exacting worship weigh like a nightmare upon all (Waddell 1972: 573).

Waddell was so much imbued with his own Aryan superiority that after visiting Tibet for the first time (he was the cultural 'expert' during the 1903-04 Lhasa mission), he found nothing new to add to his book which, he remarks, 'had never been superceded' (Stoddard 2001: 240). The examples of these writers show that despite the Western Enlightenment's claim to the sanctity of scientific observation, 'authority' had more to do with imperialism and ethnocentrism. This construction of Tibet, of the 'Orient', through self-referencing (where the self is the 'West'), is well captured by Said's concept of 'strategic formation' that we discussed earlier: 'Every writer on the Orient

²² Alluding to the possibility of Tibet's interaction with Europe in medieval ages, Lynne White points out that the appearance in Italy in the fifteenth century almost simultaneously of three items closely related to Tibetan mechanised prayer – the vertical axle windmill, the hot-air turbine, and the ball-and-chain governor – makes independent Italian invention improbable (1960: 520).

(and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he (*sic*) refers and on which he relies' (Said 1978: 20).

In the academic study of Tibet and Tibetans the popular is never wholly absent. The fact that Tibet was never colonised by Europeans meant that there was 'no factory for the production of official knowledge', leaving only unofficial knowledge, produced by travellers and enthusiasts, 'gifted amateurs'; 'institutes, libraries, archives, and museums were not created, either in Tibet or in a European metropole' (Lopez 1998: 157, 161). This facilitated creation of a utopian archive best evident in Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933). Shangri-la for Hilton is a secret 'archive state' hidden somewhere in the mountains of Central Asia (Neilson 95-7). The High Lama here has a strategic conception of a utopian archive (with the best of Western and Eastern worlds), a fortress as well as a museum, a survivalist archive: Shangri-la here 'represented an archive achieved and maintained by the state (here, explicitly as a state) without recourse to military force' (Richards 1992: 124-5, 128). The twinning of wisdom/archive/library with contemporary Tibet is also seen in the sentiments of many Western supporters of Tibet. For instance, Hollywood actor Richard Gere, probably the most famous supporter of the Tibetan cause, said in an interview: 'Now the Tibetan situation right now is pretty amazing because they are the repository of all this extraordinary wisdom, at the time their libraries have been destroyed almost entirely by the Chinese. Bits and pieces of books come in from nomads and all over Asia, it's extraordinary to see these libraries come piece together' (Frontline 1998b).

The role of the archive, in its more conventional sense of a collection of texts, is also relevant for our discussion here. Direct correlation between imperialism and the gathering of information can also be seen through the Tibet-related collection of the British Library – the majority of documents stem from central and southern Tibet, due to British political interests of the time. The volume of 'acquisition' of Tibetan books mirrored political events – not surprisingly the first and the biggest wave of new acquisitions (later called the Waddell or Lhasa collection) of the India Office Library and British Museum's Oriental Collection reached Britain in 1905 and consisted of books collected during the Younghusband expedition (Pagel 1990). The close connection between imperialism and Orientalism, the assertion of political influence and information gathering, power and knowledge is exemplified in the Younghusband

expedition. It had ‘scientific’ staff consisting of surveyors, naturalists, geologists, anthropologists (Younghusband, in the introduction to Hayden 1927: vii) – of course, their military and ‘scientific’ roles overlapped. For instance, Waddell was an authority on Tibetan Buddhism, a medical officer, as well as a collector of texts, plants,²³ and birds. The encyclopedist Waddell and the imperialist Waddell were not separate, but inextricably linked. The Western self was constituted by imperialism and Orientalism, by power and knowledge

By the end of the nineteenth century, Tibet, formerly a blank space on the map, became one of the most overcoded spaces in the British empire even though it was outside it (see Richards 1992: 109). The imaginative space of Tibet was coded through various representational strategies, some complementary, others contradictory. We shall now look at some other strategies that helped to construct Exotica Tibet.

4B.ii. Gaze

Surveillance is another strategy through which, under an over-powering gaze, the non-Western subject is rendered a knowable, visible object of disciplinary power. The gaze is not about innocent curiosity: ‘to gaze implies more than to look at – it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze’ (Schroeder 1998: 208). Through observation, examination and interpretation objects are differentiated, categorised, and identified, and made ready to be acted

²³ Waddell, along with Captain Walton, is credited with ‘discovering’ the Lhasa poppy (Fletcher 1975: xxi). Similarly the blue poppy’s scientific name is *Meconopsis baileyi*, named after its ‘discoverer’, Lieutenant-Colonel F M Bailey; the wild sheep argali and Tibet antelope chiru are *Ovis ammon hodgsoni* and *Pantholops hodgsoni* after Brian Hodgson, the British resident at the Nepalese court. This practice is reflective of the Orient as a passive object to be discovered and appropriated by the West. Tibetans (and maybe many non-Tibetans too) were familiar with the flower all along. But it required a Western ‘man’ to name it, taxonomise it in a ‘universal’ scheme of things, and thus become its discoverer. Interestingly, in the movie *The Face of Fu Manchu* (1965), the eponymous villain learns how to distil a vicious poison from the ‘Black Hill poppy’ of Tibet thanks to the papers of the Younghusband expedition where the complete secret of the plant is meticulously laid down. In some instances scientific names are hybrid such as *Ovis ammon dalailamae przewalskii* (1888) (named after the Dalai Lama and a Russian explorer Nikolai Przhevalsky) for one variant of argali, the wild sheep. As for the ideology of discovery, it has no existence of its own. As Mary Pratt points out,

It only gets ‘made’ for real after the traveler (or other survivor) returns home, and brings it into being through texts: a name on a map, a report to the Royal Geographical Society, the Foreign Office, the London Mission Society, a diary, a lecture, a travel book. Here is language charged with making the world in the most singlehanded way, and with high stakes (1992: 204).

upon. Objectification (fixing its essence) of the gazed goes hand in hand with its subjectification – gaze and surveillance are productive of identity of the gazed. Statistical study shows that ‘those who are culturally defined by the West as weak – women, children, people of colour, the poor, the tribal rather than modern, those without technology – are more likely to face the camera’ (Lutz and Collins 1994: 370).

Surveillance as an Orientalist strategy of representing the Other and rendering it disciplined is characterised by the all-knowing gaze of a white ‘man’, the colonial master, the West. It enables both the visual possession of the body of the gazed and an interposition of technique which safely conceals the body of the gazer (Spurr 1993: 22). Observations then are presented as dispassionate, objective, facts. The gaze is disembodied – statements are made as if there is no seer behind the observations. As soon as we insist on ‘embodying the gaze’ (Urry 2001) and emphasising the corporeality of the gazer, we become aware of the wider context in which she/he is operating. Observations can then be seen as stylised facts.

This is not to say that non-Westerners are visually impaired, powerless to gaze back at the West. But, the authority of imperialism for a large part of the modern period ensured that mastery and control remained a possession of Western ‘man’. The ‘monarch of all I survey’ rhetorical gesture remained peculiar to the West (see Pratt 1992: 201). Establishment of mastery through surveillance, gaze, and observation were accompanied by establishment of some sort of dominance over the object of the gaze. Appropriation was done in the name of scientific curiosity, ethnographic material gathering, protection of simple masses from their own despotic rulers, or the spread of progress.

By the early twentieth century, the notion of blunt, brutal imperialism was often given up in favour of the rhetoric of more ‘liberal and benevolent’ imperialism (although this was more for domestic consumption as the colonised continued to suffer both physical and epistemic violence). This was reflected in the prominence of what Pratt calls ‘anti-conquest’ – ‘the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeoisie subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony’ (1992: 7). British colonial and military officials who went inside Tibet often wrote their accounts as scientific exploration, or as exciting adventure (see Bailey 1957), or simply as ‘everyday’ observation (see Gordon 1876: v). Behind the innocent sounding

descriptions of travel like the ‘narrative of a plant hunter’s adventures and discoveries’ (Ward 1934) lay the violence of imperialism. Though their gaze might be considered as one of adventurer or romantic in Europe, the effect was the same as some steely-eyed militarist – the establishment and institutionalisation of control through political rule and knowledge formation. To know is to possess, especially if there is a huge asymmetry of power. Such asymmetry led to situations where it was perfectly acceptable for a participant in the Lhasa mission of 1903-04 to say: ‘In fact the visible riches and treasures of Lhasa fairly made our mouths water. The Tibetans however would not sell, and to our honour be it said; although *Lhasa was a fair object to loot*, and lay in our power, not a farthings worth was *forcibly* [author adds this word in pen in a typed text] taken from it’ (Iggulden n.d.: 6, emphasis added).

Paradoxically, the project of rendering the Other knowable and the image of it as primitive and simple went hand in hand with recognition that there are elements of inscrutability and mystery that eluded complete understanding of the Other.²⁴ While discussing his own failure to understand the unease of Phuntsog, a Tibetan who is no longer an ‘authentic’ native as he has learnt the language of the imperialist, Candler calls him a ‘strange hybrid product of restless western energies, stirring and muddying the shallows of the Eastern mind. Or are they depths? Who knows? I know nothing, only that these men are inscrutable, and one cannot see into their hearts’ (1905: 206).

Frustrated with the inaccessibility, invisibility and inscrutability of ‘the Orientals’, Western desire subjects it to a relentless investigation. Veil becomes a metaphor for all that invites, titillates, and yet resists Western knowing. Therefore,

It is no surprise that there are countless accounts and representations of the veil and the veiled women in Western discourses, all made in an effort to reveal the hidden secrets of the Orient...The veil is one of those tropes through which Western fantasies of penetration into the mysteries of the Orient and access to the interiority of the other are fantasmatically achieved (Yegenoglu 1998: 39).

Surveillance and gaze seek to render ‘subjects knowable, visible objects of disciplinary power’ (Doty 1996b: 11). They facilitate other representational strategies that seek to fix the Orient, the Other, particularly those that seek to classify, differentiate and provide identity to the Other (and in turn to the self).

²⁴ The motif of inscrutability also affects critics of dominant representations. A black critic Benjamin Brawley (the author of *The negro in literature and art* [1918]), wrote in 1922, ‘Gentle as a child, he [the ‘negro’] has also the strength of Hercules. The more we think we

4Biii. Differentiation - classification

Differentiation and Classification, two crucial factors in the formation of the modern subject (Foucault 1984: 7-11) are also evident in Western representations of the Other. The ideational differentiation between the West and the Rest underpins these representations. It also provides 'identity' to other cultures. The need to articulate one's personal and collective self in terms of identity comes from an internalisation of this principle of differentiation. Classification occupies a central place in any account of non-Western people in the Western media²⁵ of representation. It polices discourse, assigns positions, regulates groups, and enforces boundaries (Spurr 1993: 63). What Lobsang Rampa²⁶ says about his own treatment in the West partially reflects the dominant Western attitude toward the exhibition of Oriental curiosities: 'Unfortunately, western people looked upon me as a curio, as a specimen who should be put in a cage and shown off as a freak from the unknown. It made me wonder what would happen to my old friends, the Yetis, if the westerners got hold of them- as they are trying to do' (Rampa 1959: 9). Given the taxonomising predilection and conceit of Western imperialism, we can hardly disagree with Rampa's conjecture about the fate of the yetis: '(If) Western Man had his way, our poor old yetis would be captured, dissected, and preserved in spirit' (1956: 220).

While some classifications may be essential for understanding, often the classification of non-Western peoples went hand in hand with the hierarchisation and racialisation²⁷

know him the more *unfathomable* he is' (quoted in Nelson 1926: 13; emphasis added).

²⁵ Media here is used for all sorts of institutions and practices that are involved in representing 'other' cultures for the consumption in the West.

²⁶ I shall discuss his work in great detail in the next chapter. Here it is sufficient to point out that he claimed to be a Tibetan monk in an Englishman's body. Tibetan specialists considered him a fraud and revealed that he had never been to Tibet or even outside England when he wrote his first book in 1956 opening with: 'I am a Tibetan. One of the few who have reached this strange Western world' (9). This revelation did not prevent his works from becoming best sellers and from reputable newspapers hailing his accounts as authentic.

²⁷ The nineteenth and twentieth century obsession with racialising culture can be seen in the case of Tibetans too where different commentators sought to identify characteristics of the Tibet 'race'. A typical example was Graham Sandberg who was unflattering in his comments about the 'Tibetan race as "a weak and cowardly people, their pusillanimity rendering them readily submissive"' (in Bonnington 2000: 9). The fact that racism has less to do with colour and more to do with power relations becomes evident in the British treatment of Irish as 'coloured' during the nineteenth century. In 1880, Gustave de Molinari wrote that England's largest newspapers 'allow no occasion to escape them of treating the Irish as an inferior race – as a kind of white negroes [sic]' (McClintock 1995: 52). The dominant English stereotype of the Irish (and other 'white negroes' like the working class, the Jews, and prostitutes) as a

of cultures. At the top were the white Europeans and at the bottom were ‘primitive’ Africans. Chinese, Arabs, Indians, and others occupied different positions in the hierarchical table (see for instance Hunt 1987).

For Darwin, the map of the world is a great table which places the various peoples side by side, while his investigation of their functions and characters shows them to exist at different stages in a process of improvement whose end or highest point is represented by modern European civilization. The principle in natural history of internal organic structure is thus transferred to the classification of humanity in two ways, referring to moral or intellectual character in the human mind as well as to the social and political character of human society. These two subjects of valuation, moreover, remain intimately connected insofar as the higher orders of technology and government reflect greater capacity for reason and human feeling (Spurr 1993: 64).

Often an economy of stereotyping is at work in the classificatory process, permitting a quick and easy image without the responsibility of specificity and accuracy (Doty 1996b: 10). These systematic classifications of indigenous people according to their relative complexity of social organisation arose from the modes of inquiry which tried to give themselves the status of science and directly served the interests of colonialism. Science was used to ‘prove’ Western superiority over ‘primitive’ natives and within the Western eyes, justified the conquering of the Other. Classifying and hierarchising were often the rhetorical supplement to colonialism’s divide and rule strategy. Filipinos were thus represented as ‘a jumble of savage tribes’, allowing the U.S. colonisers to be represented as the ‘builders of nations and peoples rather than destroyers and exterminators’ (Doty 1996b: 36). Evolutionism²⁸ – the idea that biological as well as social and intellectual life develops in stages from simple and primitive to more complex and sophisticated forms – remains dominant in the mental landscape of the West as well as of the elite in several parts of the non-West. For instance, the state developmental practices in China and India ride roughshod over the rights and dignity of indigenous people in the name of progress – social groups are considered to occupy different hierarchical stages of social evolution with the urban

simianized and degenerate race was based on what Anne McClintock calls the iconography of ‘*domestic degeneracy*’ (*Ibid.*: 53, emphasis in original). Captain William Frederick O’Connor observation about Tibet is illustrative: ‘Common people are cheerful, happy-go-lucky creatures, absurdly like the Irish in their ways, and sometimes even in their features’ (in Sharma and Sharma 1996: 191). On the other hand, French traveller Alexandra David-Neel finds that *dobdobs*, the Lhasa monk ‘police’, looks like a ‘real negro’ (1936: 105).

²⁸ As McClintock points out, in the nineteenth century, ‘With social Darwinism, the taxonomic project, first applied to nature, was now applied to cultural history. Time became a geography of social power, a map from which they read a global allegory of “natural” social difference’ (1995: 37). Charles Darwin himself observes, ‘the varieties of man seem to act on each other in the same way as different species of animals – the stronger always expiring the weaker’ (quoted in Spurr 1993: 161).

elite at the pinnacle. Differentiation, classification and identification, when combined with racialisation, evolutionism and hierarchisation lead to the debasement and negation of some and the idealisation of others.

4Biv. Debasement - idealisation

The seemingly opposite tropes of debasement (and its corollary negation) and idealisation (and its corollary affirmation) have similar rhetorical structures; all involve processes of decontextualisation and othering. In terms of Western representations of the non-West, the binary of the noble/ignoble savage has been a product of such discursive practices.²⁹ The ease with which writers and observers have switched between highly negative and eulogising appraisals of Tibetan culture is illustrative. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Tibetans were seen as either ‘backward and barbaric or noble and charming’ (Dodin and Rather 2001: 397).

Natives have been debased and associated with filth and dirt countless times. ‘In colonial discourse every individual weakness has its political counterpart – uncivilized society, according to this logic, being little more than the uncivilized mind and body writ large’ (Spurr 1993: 76). The discourse of contamination and disease was used to enforce colonial oppression and to inculcate a sense of inferiority in the colonised peoples. Even today the third world is symbolically constructed as a site of filth and contamination. This has particularly been the case with representations of Tibet and Lhasa. Manning, the first Englishman to visit Lhasa in 1811 wrote:

There is nothing striking, nothing pleasing in its appearance. The inhabitants are begrimed with dirt and smut. The avenues are full of dogs, some growling and gnawing bits of hide which lie about in profusion and emit a charnel-house smell; others limping and looking livid; others ulcerated; others starved and dying, and pecked at by ravens; some dead and preyed upon. In short, everything seems mean and gloomy, and excites the idea of something unreal. Even the mirth and laughter of the inhabitants I thought dreamy and ghostly (quoted in Chapman 1992: 146-7).

²⁹ While for some, like Rousseau, the state of nature presented an age of innocence, for many of his contemporaries and later day commentators, nature is inferior to culture. For John Stuart Mill ‘The ways of Nature are to be conquered, not obeyed...[the notion of innocence is] a mere fancy picture, contradicted by all the realities of savage life. Savages are always liars. They have not the faintest notion of truth as a virtue’ (in Spurr 1993: 159-60). Thus, both Rousseau and Mill agree on one thing – the essence of the native as being closely linked to nature. Where they differ is implication this essence has: while for Rousseau this implies a noble savage, for Mill it implies an ignoble one.

The British Foreign Office report in its section on 'geography' felt under compulsion to allude to the poor sanitary conditions and the 'gruesome custom' of the disposal of the dead by cutting them into pieces and leaving them to be devoured by vultures, dogs, and pigs (1920: 22). Japanese traveller Ekai Kawaguchi called Lhasa a 'metropolis of filth' (Hopkirk 1983: 151). George Knight, the leader of the 1922-23 British expedition to Tibet 'affirms' the truth of various labels attached to Tibet: it is a land of mountains, monasteries and monks, land of women, dogs and dirt, country of the great unwashed (Knight 1930: 25). This presumption about a universal norm of cleanliness is evident even in recent years, as seen in Lee Feigon's comments that cleanliness and sanitation rank low on the Tibetan scale of priorities (1996: 11). Unequivocal condemnation of Tibetans for being 'dirty' began to be changed from early in the twentieth century as some visitors starting re-evaluating the dominant Western stance.³⁰ F. Spencer Chapman amended his preconceived conclusions about Lhasa: 'It is true that the common people do not wash, that their houses are, by our standards, filthy, and that they live in a state of serfdom – but what a delightful folk, nevertheless. What finer men are there in the world than the nomads of the Chang Tang?' (1992: 146)

Debasement of the natives often accompanied the strategy of negation by which Western writings conceive of the Other as absence, emptiness, nothingness, thus denying Other its agency, its history, and often, its language. Negation serves to erase what one sees in order to clear 'a space for the expansion of the colonial imagination and for the pursuit of desire' (Spurr 1993: 92-3). This, in colonial times, led to ground clearing for the expansion of colonial rule. Use of the metaphor of 'virgin' for most territories, despite the fact that they were home to many cultures and people, facilitated their appropriation by the colonisers. Within these 'blank spaces the West may write such things as civilization, progress, modernization, and democracy. Imperial encounters become missions of deliverance and salvation rather than conquests and exploitations' (Doty 1996b: 11).

Idealisation and affirmation often exist along with negation and debasement. As we shall discuss in more detail in the next chapter, idealisation and affirmation as

³⁰ British supermarket Tesco is advertising for 'Tibet' range of haircare (with names such as 'rebirth' and 'balance'), promising 'beauty through balance'. Indeed, 'Tibet' has come a long way from being a 'country of the great unwashed'.

rhetorical tropes went on overdrive in the case of Western representations of Tibet. To put it more accurately, Tibet provided an empty imaginative space over which all sorts of Western desires could play. Apart from idealisation and debasement, there was often a sense of sameness in Western writings about Tibet. Paradoxically, despite its difference, Tibet was often seen as the non-Western culture with which Europeans could identify. Didier, in his account of the Portuguese Jesuit Antonio de Andrade, points out that he looked at Tibet in terms of a 'rediscovery of a lost friend or a lost brother' (Kaschewsky 2001: 7). It has been mentioned above that while early Christians sought traces of forgotten community of Christians here, theosophists looked for the lost brotherhood of wise hermits. In the mid-nineteenth century, Joseph Wolff popularised the idea of a long-lost population of Jews in the Himalayas (Feigon 1996: 14-15). On the other hand, the Nazi SS sent an expedition in 1938-39 to ascertain whether Tibet was an abode of true Aryans or not. Thus, we can see that there are various ways in which often conflicting desires of the West got invested in Tibet. One such set of conflicting desires is eroticisation/ moralisation.

4B.v. Eroticisation - moralisation

Eroticisation and moralisation are another set of tropes prevalent in representations (both visual and textual) of the non-West. Reference to the licentiousness and voracious sexual appetite of Orientals/Arabs/Africans is conspicuous in many Western fiction and non-fiction writings, and in films. As Malek Alloula writes,

[a]rrayed in the brilliant colors of exoticisms and exuding a full-blown yet uncertain sensuality, the Orient, where unfathomable mysteries dwell and cruel and barbaric scenes are staged, has fascinated and disturbed Europe for a long time....Orientalism, both pictorial and literary.... Has set the stage for the deployment of phantasms. There is no phantasm, though, without sex ... (1998: 317).

The Orient becomes the 'fertile' ground on which the sexual fantasies of Western 'men' (mainly though not exclusively) is played out. The ideas of sexual innocence and experience, sexual domination and submissiveness play out a complex dance in the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' (Hall 1992: 302). An image of the erotic is often combined with moralisation.

One important reason for eroticisation, of course, has been to escape from conventional censorship in metropolitan societies. Association is made between the Orient and the 'freedom of licentious sex' and 'escapism of sexual fantasy' (Said 1978: 190). Contemporary incarnations of such images can be seen in a whole range

of places, from sex tourism in Thai beaches to the standardisation of 'Oriental' sex as a commodity in the 'red light' districts of Europe. At the same time, the Orient also provides opportunities for the play of 'forbidden' desires of same-sex love, especially male homosexuality and 'sodomy', as evident in the works of William Beckford, Lord Byron, T. E. Lawrence – the 'Lawrence of Arabia', Edward Carpenter, and E. M. Forster (see Parsons 1997), to name a few. Investment of these 'forbidden' desires in the non-West may be a resistance to the hegemonic masculinity of metropolitan culture, but it does not challenge the unequal power relations between the Western representer and the non-Western represented.

The very language of exploration has always been marked by strong gender distinctions and drew much of its subconscious force from sexual imagery. The famous engraving of Theodore Galle (1580) after drawing by Jan van de Straet (1575) *America* represents Amerigo Vespucci's 'discovery of Americas' (see at *Ideology of America* n.d.). It was seen literally as 'dis-covering' of the unknown land, un-covering of the naked, available, desirable and primitive female body of America by the clothed, civilised European man. The gendering of the process of colonial discovery is reflected in its representations. Therefore, we need to consider the

writing subject's textualization of the body of the Other, neither as mere description nor as genuine encounter but rather as an act of symbolic violence, mastery, and self-empowerment; and the tendency of such discursive representation to assume a narrative form, to manifest itself as a 'historied body' – in particular, as a mode of symbolic action whose agent is gendered masculine and whose object is gendered feminine (Montrose 1993: 182).

The intent to subjugate indigenous people can be seen as the male's mastery of the female.³¹ 'To perceive the East as a sexual domain, and to perceive the East as a domain to be colonial, were complementary aspirations' (Kabbani 1986: 59). The feminisation of colonial space is an act of epistemic as well as corporeal violence. McClintock argues forcefully,

(T)he feminizing of the land is both a *poetics* of ambivalence and a *politics* of violence. The 'discoverers' – filthy, ravenous, unhealthy and evil-smelling as they most likely were, scavenging along the edges of their known world and beaching on the fatal shores of their 'new' worlds, their limbs pocked with abscess and ulcers, their minds infested by fantasies of the unknown – had stepped far beyond any sanctioned guarantees. Their unsavory rages, their massacres and rapes, their atrocious rituals of

³¹ Kabbani argues that the 'European was led into the East by sexuality, by the embodiment of it in a woman *or a young boy*. He entered an imaginary harem when entering the metaphor of the Orient, weighed down by inexpressible longings.' (1986: 67; emphasis added).

militarized masculinity sprang not only from the economic lust for spices, silver and gold, but also from the implacable rage of paranoia (McClintock 1995: 28).³²

The feminised landscape titillated and provoked explorers and discovers to take control of her, to possess her – this was a common sentiment expressed in exploration literature from fifteenth century onwards. Illustrative is ‘Waiting to be Won’, a cartoon in the *Punch* magazine on 5 June 1875. It had a pin-up of ‘the White Ladye of the Pole’ (*sic*) and the verses overleaf celebrate how the white Witch-Maiden sitting above the Pole ‘Draws *manly* hearts with strange *desire* to lift her icy *veil*’ (in Spufford 1996: 9, emphases added). The cartoon expresses a combination of the gendering, sexualisation and eroticisation of ‘unexplored’ places. Edward William Lane’s described his first sight of Egypt in 1825 thus, ‘As I approached the shore, I felt like an Eastern bridegroom, about to lift the veil of his bride, and to see, for the first time, the features that were to charm, or disappoint, or disgust him’ (in Kabbani 1986: 67).

These erotics of imperial conquest evident in the evocation of feminised space were linked to the Enlightenment’s pursuit of truth. After all, ‘study, understanding, knowledge, evaluation...are instruments of conquest’ (Said 1978: 309). European consciousness is encoded as masculine and the object of knowledge as feminine.

All too often, Enlightenment metaphysics presented knowledge as a relation of power between two gendered spaces, articulated by a journey and a technology of conversion: the male penetration and exposure of a veiled, female interior; and the aggressive conversion of its ‘secrets’ into a visible, male science of the surface (McClintock 1995: 23).

Writing about the Other and production of knowledge about other cultures is treated as an encounter within the Orientalist framework.

The relation between Orientalist and Orient was essentially hermeneutical: standing before a distant, barely intelligible civilization or cultural monument, the Orientalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard-to-reach object. Yet the Orientalist remained outside the Orient,

³² Overt corporeal violence did not always accompany exploration. As Peter Bishop points out, in the case of Tibet, the curiosity was

primarily *visual* – a fascination with *appearances*, with the *display* of the landscape, of the art, the architecture, the costumes, the colours and the light...In Tibet, colonization, conquest, domination, taming, destruction, rape, violation and arrogant civilizing were virtually absent and only hovered around the edges of Western fantasies (1989: 177).

Due to ‘the imaginative potency of Lhasa itself and the very special place it occupied in Western fantasies’ (*Ibid.* 178), the mystery of Lhasa evoked respect. ‘The very vulnerability of Lhasa and Tibet added to their femininity for these Western travellers...but the feminine was also a source of mystery and, although materially vulnerable, was psychologically and spiritually powerful’ (*Ibid.* 279).

which, however much it was made to appear intelligible, remained beyond the Occident. This cultural, temporal, and geographical distance was expressed in metaphors of depth, secrecy, and sexual promise: phrases like ‘the veils of an Eastern bride’ of ‘the inscrutable Orient’ passed into the common language. (Said 1978: 222).

The combination of knowledge and eroticisation is illustrated strongly in Bell’s statement when he talks of Lhasa as practically ‘untouched by white men’ – ‘Shut off from their outer world by their immense mountain barriers, Tibet still presented a virgin field of inquiry’ (1928: viii). Fernand Grenard regrets Tibet’s closure, her foiling of attempts by Europeans to pry her open: ‘In truth, the Tibetans are one of the nations that have changed the least in the course of the centuries and it is greatly to be regretted that they are so difficult to access and so obstinately opposed to enquiries’ (1904: 373). This resonates with Said’s analysis of the Middle East in Western imagination: ‘The Middle East is resistant, as any virgin would be, but the male scholar wins the prize by bursting open, penetrating through the Gordian knot despite the “taxing task”’ (Said 1978: 309). Such statements provide us a convenient entry point into a discussion on eroticisation of places such as Tibet.

Literature on Tibet exemplifies a ‘coherent hermeneutical strategy of feminization and eroticization’ that makes ‘gendered difference’ (Zamora quoted in Gallagher 1997) the dominant meaning of ‘exotic’ places. Not surprisingly, after the British invasion of Lhasa in 1903-04, Lord Curzon wrote that ‘I am almost ashamed of having destroyed the virginity of the bride to whom you aspired, viz. Lhasa’ in a letter addressed to Sven Hedin (a famous Swedish explorer) as the latter described the expedition as ‘the rape of Lhasa’ (Schell 2000: 201). On his part, Hedin lost ‘the longing that had possessed [him] to penetrate the Holy City’ (Bishop 1989: 176). These writers and commentators draw upon a long tradition of what McClintock calls ‘European pornotropics’ treating ‘male travel as an erotics of ravishment’ in which uncertain places were figured as ‘libidinally eroticized’ (1995: 22).

The most prevalent metaphor for the British invasion of Tibet was that of ‘unveiling’.³³ The attitude of these travellers was ‘almost voyeuristic’, the most commonly expressed aim being to ‘get a “peep” at Tibet, or at Lhasa’ (Bishop 1989: 177). Edmund Candler wrote an account of the ‘unveiling of Lhasa’ (1905). P.

³³ For Tibetophiles such as Heinrich Hensoldt and Madame Helena Blavatsky (theosophists), the veil was an important metaphor too. But for them it was the Tibetans, especially the Dalai

Millington, who later wrote his book as 'a man in the street', described going to Lhasa as 'assisting in drawing aside a purdah' and departure as the 'show was over' (1905: 77, 199). Writing about Lhasa, Waddell says that the enigma has been solved (virginity lost!) for the

fairy Prince of 'Civilisation' has roused her from her slumbers, her closed doors are broken down, her dark veil of mystery is lifted up, and the long-sealed shrine, with its grotesque cults and its idolised Grand Lama, shorn of his sham nimbus, have yielded up their secrets, and lie disenchanted before our Western eyes. Thus, alas! Inevitably, do our cherished romances of old pagan world crumble at the touch of our modern hands! (1905: 2).

This triumphalism (of civilisation over obstinacy) was mixed with regret and a sense of inevitability with a sense of betrayal. For 'Shangri-la' is conceptualised as 'a virginal state: once defiled by foreign invasion, modernization or internal political strife, it is as if some kind of betrayal has taken place' (Hutt 1996: 52). Candler expresses this mixed emotions when he says, 'To-morrow, when we enter Lhasa, we will have unveiled the last mystery of the East. There are no more forbidden. Why could we have not left at least one city out of bounds?' (in Sharma and Sharma 1996: 119).

Eroticisation was not the only representational strategy deployed by the West when gendering the Orient. Moralisation was an effective tool too. Morality was seen as a sign of progress. European bourgeois morality came to represent the pinnacle of civilisation. This was contrasted with a 'lack' of morality amongst natives, 'Orientals', working classes, and so on. The policing of morality primarily involved policing women's bodies. Hence, cultures (like that of Tibet) where this sort of policing was negligible were seen as immoral. A common idea amongst travellers and commentators was that Tibetans ranked low in terms of morality and the 'freedom' accorded to women was both a cause and an effect of this low moral standard. A discourse of filth and contamination was attached to that on morality and the status of women. A member of the British expedition to Lhasa makes the observation:

Tibetan morals are not of a very high order and there seems to be a good deal of promiscuousness in the relations of the lay population. I twice came across parties of men and women bathing together in a small stream behind the Potala, which struck me as most unusual as the majority of Tibetans are filthy and grimy to a degree (Iggulden n.d. 8).

Lama, who lifted the veil, the other veil, the mystical veil of Isis (Bishop 1989: 182).

David Macdonald contended that in Tibet, women have much influence and compared with the West, morals are lax (1929: 133-4). Those who showed admiration for Tibetan society were not exempt from passing moral judgements about the Tibetans – Riencourt argued that Europeans and Americans can learn a lot from the Tibetans as amongst them women are ‘perfectly free’ and equal; however, a laxity in sexual relations was a sore spot as it lead to rampant sexually transmitted diseases (1950: 152-3). In contrast to European (and Japanese in the case of Kawaguchi) women, Tibetan women are unclean, disrespectful to their husbands, lack character, and hence are ‘objects more to be loved and pitied not respected and adored’ (Kawaguchi in Sharma and Sharma 1996: 175). Thus, we see that eroticisation and moralisation often went hand in hand as representational tropes.

4B.vi. Chronopolitics

Chronopolitics, or the politics of time, has played an important role in Western representations of the non-Western Other. The Other has been imagined as socially and culturally backward (in time) – medieval (feudal like pre-Renaissance Europe), archaic (like ancient Egyptians or Mesopotamians), pre-historic (primitive), or simply beyond the matrix of time (timeless). The colonial journey and travels of contemporary Western commentators is figured as proceeding forward in geographical space but backward in historical time. The otherness of non-Western cultures is ‘accepted’ as ‘earlier stages of the evolution of the self’ (Ashis Nandy quoted in Inayatullah and Blaney 1996: 77). This trope, similar to what McClintock calls ‘the invention of anachronistic space’, renders non-dominant groups out of history. As she discusses, according to the trope of anachronistic space ‘colonized people – like women and the working class in the metropolis – do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographical space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans, atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency – the living embodiment of the archaic “primitive” (McClintock 1995: 30). Chronopolitics allows generalisations such as ‘[c]ritical philosophy, the mother of modern psychology, is as foreign to the East as to the medieval Europe’ (Evans-Wentz 1954: xxix). The Other is both a prisoner of time (frozen in certain stage of history) and an escapee (outside the time grid, timeless, outside history). The entire range of timeframe available under chronopolitics can be illustrated through European representations of Tibet and Tibetans during the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. The world is divided into chronological reserves, and when we enter Tibet, we reach a different age, as if 'tracts of past time persisted here and there which could be visited' (Spufford 1996: 212).

The most prevalent representation of Tibet was that it was *medieval*. As a proof of Tibetan medieval mentality, Younghusband talks of the abbot from Shigatse:

Whatever intellectual capacity he may have had was not very apparent to the casual observer, and he corrected me when I inadvertently let slip some observation implying that the earth was round, and assured me that when I had lived longer in Tibet, and had the time to study, I should find that it was not round, but flat, and not circular, but triangular, like the bone of a shoulder of mutton (1910: 128).

Evaluations differed from repugnance to ambiguity to nostalgia, depending on perception of Europe's own medieval past. Typical, especially during the British invasion in 1903-04, was O'Connor's statement: '[s]triking feature is marked resemblance in many points between Tibet at the present time and Europe as it must have been during the Middle Ages or up to the time of Reformation. Absolute monarchy, feudalism and monasticism- suppressed lower orders as in Tibet' (O'Connor in Sharma and Sharma 1996: 90). Anti-Catholic sentiment was palpable. As Knight writes, '[a]ll the evils of medieval priestcraft are everywhere obvious in Tibet' (Knight 1930: 27). In contrast, some did not find the 'medieval flavour' repugnant but disagreeable. Candler mused: 'The Tibetans are not the savages they are depicted. They are civilized, if medieval' (1905: 246) and his feelings were 'confirmed' as a result of the only incident in 1904 when a Tibetan monk attacked the soldiers of occupying British-Indian force. He described how a lama 'ran amuck outside the camp with the coat of mail and huge paladin's sword concealed beneath his cloak, a *medieval* figure who thrashed the air with his brand like a flail in sheer lust of blood. He was hanged *medievally* the next day within sight of Lhasa'³⁴ (*Ibid.*: 265, emphases added). Tibet is medieval, and hence feudal and bad.

However, we see more ambiguity as the twentieth century unfolds: 'The political and social order of Tibet is several hundred years behind that which now holds in England.

³⁴ The monk was hanged in full public view to act as a deterrent to any other Tibetan contemplating resistance. It is ironic that British justified their own barbarity by blaming it on the medieval quality of their field of operation, by putting the responsibility on the victims. There are many such examples (for instance, the French barbarity in Algeria, British ferocity in Kenya during the Mau Mau rebellion, the American mistreatment of Al Qaeda captives) where violent response is justified in the name of inherent proclivities of the victims.

Tibetans have an instinct for orderliness and this helps them establish hierarchy on a firm basis which in turn aids in the maintenance of order' (Bell 1928: 141). Ambiguity is mixed with nostalgia in Chapman's account: 'Tibet is in the position of European countries in the Middle Ages - in many ways a position which we are bound, nowadays, to envy' (1992: 93). The country is run by the monasteries and by the noble families. If the son of a merchant or farmer is ambitious he enters a monastery, for only there can hope to rise to that position of importance to which he is entitled. But there is no unemployment, no underlying feeling of insecurity, and except for those who choose begging as a profession – no real poverty' (*Ibid.*: 92-3)

The practice of associating modern Tibet with Medieval Europe is common even today. A couple who lived and worked in Lhasa for a few months in the 1980s wrote, 'there seemed less distance culturally between Shakespeare's England and twentieth-century Tibet, than between Shakespeare's England and its twentieth century counterpart' (Hadfield and Hadfield 1988: 101). Similarly, according to a contemporary historian, 'Tibet was a medieval society that somehow survived into the second half of the 20th Century' (Grunfeld 1987: 31).

Apart from medievalism, Tibet also was imagined as parallel to the ancient archaic world. Potala palace, for Perceval Landon, was 'an image of that ancient and mysterious faith which has found its last and fullest expression beneath the golden canopies of Lhasa' (1905, Volume II: 262). As in writings of theosophists, Tibetan Buddhism began to be imagined as forming a direct connection with Ancient Egyptian religion. Egyptophilia began merging into Tibetophilia. 'It was viewed as a late, and perhaps final, flowering of the world's archaic mystery religions' (Bishop 1989: 155).

Western imagination of Tibet also flirted with the prehistoric and the primitive. During this period, primitive meant uncivilised form of human life, lower on the scale of social evolution. Hensoldt wrote:

It would be folly to shut out eyes to the fact that the Thibetans occupy a very low position in the scale of human advancement...Their culture is inferior to that of the most semi-barbarous races, comparing unfavourable even with that of certain Indian tribes of the American continent, such as the Pueblos, Zunis, etc. (quoted in Bishop 1989: 156).

Grenard was reminded of 'American Redskins' by some of the Tibetans (1904: 72), while Chapman wrote, 'I sang an Eskimo folk-song and Norbhu [a Tibetan

companion] said it was exactly like Tibetan music – a doubtful compliment, but interesting, seeing that the Eskimos and Tibetans are, ethnologically speaking, fairly closely related’ (Chapman 1992: 52). While Hensoldt considered some Tibetans to be lower on the human evolutionary scale than many Native Americans, Chapman found them ‘higher’. However, for Chapman this was regrettable as

in this country [Tibet] one cannot get to know the people. In Greenland one could wander off and be perfectly happy with the Eskimos as long as one could speak the language. There one passed as an equal and lived, hunted, and travelled just as they did. We did very well without servants. Here it is fundamentally different. In this feudal country one is a Sahib ... (1992: 290).

Christian Meyers (1853) in *Conversations-Lexicon* writes: ‘According to the theories of many historians, the human race expanded from Tibet and its neighbouring lands, not from Asia proper’ (Kaschewsky 2001: 19). One most potent emblem of Tibet’s association with the prehistoric in the Western imagination is the figure of *Yeti*. Though Brian H. Hodgson made the first reference to a yeti-like creature (wild, big, hairy men) in the West in 1832, it was not until mid-twentieth century that the legend acquired wide circulation.

Divested of any palaeolithic characteristics, the yeti would then be imagined as a remnant of a pre-human missing link, or an evolutionary dead end: it would become part of an entirely different imaginative context.^[35] But for the late Victorians this creature merely emphasized the primevalness of Tibet, both in its fauna^[36] and landscape and in the superstitions and customs of its people (Bishop 1989: 158).

As mentioned earlier, primitiveness had different connotations for commentators at different point in West’s encounter with Tibet. To recapitulate, for some it reflected the barbarity of Tibetans, for others it reflected their innocence and even their wisdom and vitality.

Chronopolitics entails not only a fixing of cultures and groups of people in particular chronological reserve, but also detemporalising, escaping the imagination from confines of time and history. In Western representations, many things, such as the Potala Palace represent the timelessness of Tibetan life: ‘To me the Potala represents

³⁵ The imaginative potency of the yeti was best illustrated in *Tintin in Tibet* in which the ‘abominable snowman’ (and a ‘levitating lama’) was emblematic of Tibet. Similarly, yeti and Tibet also figure more recently in the popular video game of Lara Croft – *Tomb raider II*.

³⁶ In 1879, Russian explorer Prejevalsky discovered the ‘original’ horse in the remoteness of Mongolian Central Asia, answering the riddle of the famous ponies of the Mongols. ‘They were the original, the archetypal source of vigour and life-energy uncorrupted by civilization. Bonvalot even reported that his small Tibetan horses were carnivorous, feeding “on raw flesh”. What powerful metaphors of primal vitality for the horse-worshipping Victorians!’ (Bishop 1989: 158).

the very essence of the Tibetan people. It has a certain untamed dignity in perfect harmony with the surrounding rugged country; a quality of stolid unchangeableness – it seems to say: “Here I have been for hundreds of years, and here I intend to stay for ever”” (Chapman 1992: 7). For others, timelessness is represented by the Lhasa city itself: ‘It is improbable that the City of Lhasa has altered at all during the past 19 years, or for the matter of that, during the past few centuries’ (Iggulden n.d.: 1). Almost all visitors and commentators note the lack of any appreciation of ‘time’ in Tibetan culture. For some, Tibetan resistance to the European notion of time caused annoyance,³⁷ for others it is liberating.³⁸ Tibet is perceived as a ‘lost horizon’, a kind of *bardo* (in-between) place, outside the grid of regulated time and space (Bishop 1997: 56).

Since the very beginning of the twentieth century, a strong feeling running through many writings is that time was running out for Tibet. In his letter to Younghusband, Landon expresses a touch of regret after the British (and hence his own) success in reaching Lhasa, as the city and the country represented ‘the last of the greater explorations possible on the earth’, ‘last country to be discovered by the civilized world’, though he was glad that it was the English, ‘faithful servant of restlessness of progress’ who went in first (1905: x-xi). This conservative reaction of (often-aristocratic) explorers reflected their scepticism of mass tourism and paradoxical ambiguity about progress. Ironically, many Westerners celebrated Tibetan culture’s apparent immunity to the machine and modern communication, while the Tibetans tried to adopt them during the 1930s and 1940s (Bishop 1997: 58-9). The idea of Tibet as primeval offered space for two mutually contradictory representations – Tibet as repository of wisdom and Tibet as irrational and child-like.

4B.vii. Infantilisation - gerontification

The Orient is the space for the ‘wisdom of the east’ in some representations, while in others it is essentially irrational, emotional, uncivilised, child-like. As Ella Shohat and

³⁷ Chapman notes that though senior Tibetan officials had been sent a watch so as to appraise them of ‘our time’, they arrived late: ‘As we had discovered on the journey up, time means very little in Tibet’ (Chapman 1940: 73).

³⁸ In a description of his travel in the search of the ‘snow leopard’, Matthiessen writes that as the final part of preparation for the travel, ‘I remove my watch, as the time is losing all significance’ (1995: 57).

Robert Stam write, 'Africa can be a child and Asia a shriveled old man, but Europe always maintains a relational advantage. Both Asia and Africa are seen as constitutively deficient, while Europe always keeps its place at the apex of a value-laden hierarchy' (1994: 139). This infantilisation is a crucial representational strategy through which the Other is rendered incapable of making decisions for itself. As Roxanne Doty points out, complementary to the childlike attributes attached to the Filipinos in the American counterinsurgency discourses were ineptitude and inefficiency (1993b: 313). Therefore, the 'United States had to be patient and sympathetic, yet firm, in using its constructive and guiding influence on its former ward. The ostensibly nurturing relationship invoked by the parent/child opposition obscured and justified practices of domination' (Doty 1996b: 89). Infantilisation justifies guardianship, patronage by the adult, more enlightened, rational West.³⁹ The '*in loco parentis* ideology of paternalistic gradualism...[assumes]... the necessity of White trusteeship' (Shohat and Stam 1994: 140). The ordering of the world into various binary opposites such as civilised/uncivilised, modern/backward, developed/undeveloped, and so on, 'is readily framed as a relation between adult and child, and the processes of colonialism and neocolonialism in which such binary taxonomies have been instantiated have involved both subtle and very unsubtle practices of infantilization' (Persaud and Walker 2001: 374-5).

O'Connor describes Tibetans as great children, very ignorant, very simple, and devoid of all idea of moral responsibility (in Sharma and Sharma 1996: 192). During lengthy negotiations preceding and accompanying the British invasion of Tibet, it is common to come across Tibetans being compared to obstinate, illogical children. Younghusband found them 'very much like big children' (Uncovered Editions 1999: 105, 148). While discussing the Tibetan attitude during the pre-Lhasa negotiations, Peter Fleming observes that 'Logic was a concept wholly alien to the Tibetan mind', their 'power of reasoning did not even extend to that of a child'; they did not evade issues, they simply declined to recognise their existence (Fleming 1961: 221). At the end of his two-year expedition, the image of the childlike Tibetans remained dominant. Younghusband says that the impression left on him was that the Tibetans, 'though excessively childish, were very pleasant, cheery people, and individually, probably quite well disposed towards us' (Younghusband 1910: 124). Infantilisation

³⁹ Tibetans would prosper 'under British auspices and assistance' (Sandberg 1904: 14) – such

also allowed passing judgements on Tibetan (lack of) sense of morality (as the quote by O'Connor above suggests). Landon qualifies this by saying that Tibetans have their own sense of morality in that they are industrious and capable of 'extraordinary physical activity though '(i)t is true that this activity finds its vent rather in the muscles of the legs than in those of the fingers, but this is only to be expected' (Landon Volume II 1905: 45).

A good illustration of the effectiveness of infantilisation in clearing the conscience of European imperialists as aggressors, as perpetrators of violence, comes from the massacre of Tibetans at Guru. In his own words, Younghusband found 'Tibetans huddled together like a flock of sheep' (1910: 177) and later put the blame on the 'crass stupidity and childishness of the Tibetan general' 'who had 'completely lost his head' (Mehra 1968: 223) and on the Lhasa priest: 'Ignorant and arrogant, this priest herded the superstitious peasantry to destruction' (Younghusband 1910: 178, 179). The imagery of Tibetans as children, as dumb animal (sheep), allows British to visualise that if it had not been for some 'selfish' elite (priests in the case of Tibetans), ordinary people would welcome European dominance.

The Orient is not only a place where the mental development of people is arrested at the level of a child; it is also a place of sages, an old place. As Slavoj Zizek writes,

What characterizes the European civilization is...its *ex-centered* character – the notion that the ultimate pillar of Wisdom, the secret *agalma*, the spiritual treasure, the lost object-cause of desire, which we in the West long ago betrayed, could be recuperated out there, in the forbidden exotic place. Colonization was never simply the imposition of Western values, the assimilation of the Oriental and other Others to the European Sameness; it was always also the search for the lost spiritual innocence of OUR OWN civilization (Zizek 2001b: 67-8; capitalisation in original).

Association of the East with wisdom and spirituality, through the strategy that may be called gerontification, is well exemplified in the case of Tibet. It is often the place, not the people, which is rendered wise on account of its age. Though Blavatsky⁴⁰ and Rudyard Kipling (through his lama figure in *Kim*) were instrumental in bringing together the idea of Tibet with the search for wisdom and spirituality, it is in the twentieth century that this association gathered a momentum of its own. After living

sentiments were rife during the time.

⁴⁰ The Theosophists were heirs to ancient divine wisdom, which — long ago lost to ordinary people — had secretly been preserved by a benevolent brotherhood residing in Tibet (Blavatsky 1921 in Pederson 2001: 153).

the life of Tibetan mystic for few years, David-Neel felt that the natural edifices like mountains and valleys in the Himalayan region conveyed a mysterious message to her: ‘What I heard was the thousand-year old echo of thoughts which are re-thought over and over again in the East, and which, nowadays, appear to have fixed their stronghold in the majestic heights of Thibet’ (1991: 24). Describing his escape from the Spanish prisoner camp to Tibet, Riencourt equated it ‘as an escape from the inferno of wars and concentration camps, searching for this forbidden land of mystery, the only place of earth where wisdom and happiness seemed to be a reality’ (1950: 4). There are many who would agree with Robert Thurman and his extolling of the virtues of Tibet as a uniquely spiritual civilisation:

While Western and Tibetan personalities share the complex of modernity of consciousness, they are diametrically opposed in outlook, one focused on matter and the other on mind ... While the American national purpose is ever greater material productivity, the Tibetan national purpose is ever greater spiritual productivity (1998: 10-11).⁴¹

4B.viii. Naturalisation

Naturalisation is another theme that operates within Western representational practices, as ‘natives’ are often associated with nature. Here, nature is opposed to culture and civilisation: primitive people live in a state of nature and similarly, those who live close to the nature are primitive, uncivilised. Binaries such as rational/irrational, culture/nature, science/art, that lie at the heart of Western metaphysics are gendered and unequally valued. Women, natives – in short the Other – are associated with nature and irrationality as opposed to rational, scientific, cultured maleness. At the heart of the matter lies the Enlightenment distinction between ‘man’ and nature, and the idea of progress as man’s struggle for mastery over nature.⁴² As lifestyles of various native cultures questioned this distinction,⁴³ through

⁴¹ What a contrast to the lamentation of writers at the beginning of the twentieth century where Tibet was considered primarily as a hard and miserly land, ‘destined only to serve as a refuge for some race wanting in ordinary intelligence ... [and Tibetans were ridiculed for having] never achieved more than an indifferent culture, a pale reflection of the civilizations of China and Hindustan ... [no doubt Tibetans call their own land] *kob yul* or the barbarian land’ (Grenard 1904: 221).

⁴² This conception of human beings as separate from nature has been peculiar to Western civilisation. Most of the non-Western civilisations and cultures had imagined human beings as an integral part of nature. The contemporary environmental discourses that highlight the interdependence between humans and nature too often fail to break away from the human/nature distinction as the language of interdependence presumes autonomous identity.

⁴³ In many cultures human beings are seen as a part of nature, not something to be defined in opposition to it. The notion of ‘sacred’ often challenges the Western will of acquiring mastery

presuppositions and statement of ‘facts’ native people were reduced through the trope of naturalisation. This in the nineteenth and twentieth century allowed justification for the conquest of nature and of ‘children of nature’ – the primitive peoples. Writing in the context of American representations of Filipinos, according to Doty representations endowed the natives with

a particular kind of identity that moved in an unsteady fashion between two poles, both closer to nature than the rational adult. More benignly portrayed, Filipinos were childlike, lacking the rationality generally attributed to adults. They were impulsive, unreflective, imitative, and unaware of consequences. Less benignly portrayed, they were given an identity that was in many ways more animal than human (1996b: 39).

Both representations rendered the natives ‘incapable of self-government and in need of guidance, tutoring, and uplifting’ (*Ibid.*). Thus, the idealisation of nature went hand in hand with the notion that many natives lived in a state of pure nature, lacked developed social organisation and civil society, and therefore needed the enlightened Western ‘man’ to civilise them and to exploit the nature’s bounty. ‘The passions of the warm countries are voluptuous, relating to love and tenderness. Nature does so much for people that they have almost nothing to do. Provided that an Asiatic has women and repose, he is content’ (Rousseau quoted in Spurr 1993: 157). This native then is a stereotypical object of contempt in the modern age. As David Spurr points out, ‘(t)hat natural abundance which Rousseau attributes to the southern climates turns out to be, even within the boundaries of his own discourse, a fateful lack when considered in the light of human progress’ (1993: 158).

Reducing people to nature and immediate environment is also seen in the case of Tibetans. The dominant physical feature of Tibetan landscape is mountains and hence Tibetan culture is seen as a response to this difficult terrain. The culture (and religion) of Tibetans is reduced to their natural environment. Many see Tibetan popular religion as based on ‘emotions of awe and insignificance caused by overwhelming grandeur of the Tibetan landscape and the harshness of its climate’ (Kvaerne 2001: 49). In a similar vein, Riencourt contends that the ‘psychic knowledge of the lamas’ is caused due to ‘awe-inspiring landscape, severity of the climate and remoteness of its valleys, the majestic silence and peace of the roof of the world’ (1950: 263).

4B.ix. Self-affirmation – self-criticism

over the nature. This closeness to nature is ironically seen as a sign of primitiveness by the

All these strategies have been underpinned by a sense of affirmation; affirmation of narcissism in the name of moral superiority. The Orient is seen by the Europeans as ‘a pretext for self-dramatisation and differentness’, a ‘malleable theatrical space in which can be played out the egocentric fantasies’ thus affording ‘endless material for the imagination, and endless potential for the Occidental self’ (Kabbani 1986: 11). Authority and control was often justified by affirming inherently racist and self serving ideas like the ‘white man’s burden’. Doty shows that during the debate over the annexation of Philippines by the United States affirmation of ‘American manhood’ was a nodal point to which both opponents and proponents of annexation referred (1996b: 30). Further, the

North is constituted vis-à-vis the South as modern, efficient, competent. The South is constituted as its lack, its other. Imperial encounters have always contained the element of ‘modern man’ confronting his ‘traditional’ other, characterized alternatively as uncivilized, incompetent, childlike, and incapable of handling power and authority. The incapacity to exercise agency in the same manner as the Western ‘self’ is repeatedly inscribed in the identity of the non-Western ‘other’. The civilization of the ‘other’ requires intervention’ (*Ibid.*: 160).

While discussing various modes and strategies of representation we have already seen how Westerners sought to affirm their own identity and activities. Representation of the natives as irrational, immoral, inefficient, duplicitous affirms self-representation as rational, moral, efficient, honest. This narcissistic indulgence is exemplary in Columbus’s encounter with the Native Americans:

Either he conceives the Indians (though without using these words) as human beings altogether, having the same rights as himself; but then he sees them not only as equals but also as identical, and this behavior leads to assimilationism, the projection of his own values on the others. Or else he starts from the difference, but the latter is immediately translated into terms of superiority and inferiority (in his case, obviously, it is the Indians who are inferior). What is denied is the existence of a human substance truly other, something capable of being not merely an imperfect state of oneself. These two elementary figures of the experience of alterity are both grounded in egocentrism, in the identification of our own values with values in general, of our *I* with the universe – in the conviction that the world is one (Tzvetan Todorov quoted in Inayatullah and Blaney 1996: 75).

The sense of affirmation can be seen not only in overtly imperialist writings, but also in those with more humanitarian and liberal content. For instance, John Nelson approvingly writes about the contributions of the ‘negro character in American literature’, because of association with slavery

they [the Americans] have themselves received much – something, no doubt, from his [‘negro’s] carefree, irresponsible temper, his irrepressible good humor and musical

dominant rhetoric of progress.

talent, his unconscious philosophy that the present moment is the all important moment;....Gradually he has affected American civilization; gradually, too, he has himself changed from an uncouth savage to the more sophisticated and genial individual of today ... (1926: 14-5).

This liberal approval of the 'negro' is itself based on stereotyping of the black Other and an affirmation of the white Self as the true American. Similarly, though John Stuart Mill was liberal, he could say 'The sacred duties which civilised nations owe to the independence and nationality of each other are not binding towards those to whom nationality an independence are certain evil, or at best a questionable good' (quoted in Said 1994: 80).

Though affirmation of the Western Self was the ultimate force behind most representations, some also deployed specific representations to question the Self. That is, of representations of the non-Western Other has often been deployed in the service of self-criticism. As we shall see in greater detail in the next chapter, this has been particularly true in the case of Western representations of Tibet, especially since after the turn of the twentieth century.⁴⁴ 'I delightedly forgot Western lands, that I belonged to them, and that they would probably take me again in the clutches of their sorrowful civilization', said David-Neel (1991: 61). Suggestive observations presented in the *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* are meant as an aid to

awaken the Occident to the extreme dangers into which it has been led, in large measure by a medical science ignorant for the most part of the Art of Dying, they will have furthered the prayers of the lamas by helping to dissipate that Darkness of Ignorance which, as the Buddha realized, enshrouds the world (Evans-Wentz 1949: xii-xiii)

Tibet becomes a service society for the West, offering resources by which the West can criticise itself, question its values. As Heinrich Harrer points out, Tibetans have 'a heritage superior to ours...[they] might bring succour to the pessimism of the West' (1985: 52). Through his analysis of spaces resistant to globalisation, Brett Neilson highlights that 'The Shangri-La myth [associated predominantly with Tibet] offers an important means of imagining an outside to globalisation, an outside that may be ultimately unrepresentable, that is to say a space that resists localisation and cannot be mapped within the dominant grids of cartographic projection' (2000: 110-11).

⁴⁴ This is not to deny that, with the exception of theosophists, self-criticism was entirely absent during the Victorian era. For instance, throughout his book, Landor makes sarcastic comments about the 'foggy little islands' of England and the 'unadventurous' English bourgeoisie (Landor 1905: 2).

4C. Conclusion

Various strategies – archive, gaze, differentiation, identification, classification, debasement, negation, idealisation, eroticisation, moralisation, naturalisation, infantilisation, gerontification, self-criticism, and self-affirmation – as well as modes – essentialism, stereotyping, exoticism – that underlay Western representations of the Other, of alien cultures during the period of European imperialism, remain integral to Western representations of the Other even in this postcolonial world, albeit in different ways. An approach which sees representation as a process as well as a substantive is better placed to examine the ways in which the Western discovery and consciousness of the east went hand in hand with Western imperial rule over the east. How this played out in Tibet, a place that never came under formal European control, is a concern of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Poetics of Exotica Tibet

‘I can never get used to the idea of a Tibetan driving a car’ (Shakya 1992: 15).¹

The poetics of Exotica Tibet involves an analysis of Western representations of Tibet. It is a story of Western interactions with Tibet during various historical periods – it is about the production of images of Tibet within these interactions as well as about how the interactions were in turn framed under specific imaginative regimes.² These interactions offered opportunities for new images and imaginations; yet, they in turn acquired their meaning through these imaginations. The ‘truth’ about Tibet was not discovered, but produced out of specific processes of imageries and imaginaries. This constitutive relation between Western interactions and imaginations of Tibet is the subject of this chapter. Following Roxanne Doty, these Western interactions can be seen in terms of *imperial encounters* which conveys the ‘idea of asymmetrical encounters in which one entity has been able to construct “realities” that were taken seriously and acted upon and the other entity has been denied equal degrees or kinds of agency’ (1996b: 3).

Though Tibet was ‘always in the process of being created, always adjusting its contours in step with the changing requirements of the European fantasies’, the place of Tibet also gave coherence to these fantasies (Bishop 1989: 12). Instead of looking at specific representational regimes that existed at various points in time, I shall draw out some dominant representational themes constituting Exotica Tibet during the twentieth century and explicate them by looking at specific sites of cultural production ranging from novels such as Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901) to the Hollywood blockbuster *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997). These themes have held different currency throughout the century. The purpose is to enrich our understanding of Western practices of imagination of third world places like Tibet. We have much to gain from a critical and constructive engagement with the past and present of such imaginative

¹ An academic colleague’s comment to Tsering Shakya, a Tibetan scholar based in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London.

² As Laurie Hovell (1993) argues, travel writing and Tibet are connected in more than one ways – travellers ‘wrote about’ Tibet (came to imagine Tibet as having a describable reality distinct from themselves), Tibet was ‘written’ (vision was created, often independent of the place), and Tibet was ‘written on’ (as a place on which desires and fears were projected and constructed).

practices. The themes will draw upon the theoretical framework set up in the previous two chapters.

Three qualifications need to be made here. First, I shall focus on those works that are available in English. This misses out the richness of representations of Tibet in several other European languages.³ However, it does not take away much from the general nature of the arguments as in the first half of the twentieth century, most travellers and commentators shared a British-inspired ‘internationalism’ assisted by similarities in class (aristocratic and upper middle) and gender (male) (Bishop 1989: 6). The scene was dominated by the British because of their presence as imperialists in India and in the Himalayan region. All the primary texts have been published in or translated into English. Moreover, the travellers and explorers formed a ‘fairly cohesive international community’, one which shared interest and familiarity, if not friendship (Bishop 1989: viii). Imperialism and Orientalism provided a common frame of reference. The literary critic Paul Fussell notes ‘the Englishness of it all’ (Spengen 2000). When speaking of Tibet in the Western imagination or Western representations of Tibet, we should be aware that the term ‘Western’ is problematic, as Tibet has not been of much concern to most people in the West. Nevertheless ‘it *has* exerted a direct and compelling influence on a sizeable and influential minority’ (Bishop 1993: 132; emphasis in original).

Second, the task in this chapter is not to demystify Tibet and present a true picture of the ‘real’ Tibet underlying the pile of representations. It does not indulge in any form of ‘revelatory device’ espousing the idea that Tibet is a site of misrepresentation, that it is ‘not *really* a mystical or romantic place’ (Barnett 2001: 294-5, emphasis added). Nor do I seek to chart a history of Western interactions with Tibet. Instead, the task is to present various contours of Exotica Tibet – commonalities, differences, and contradictions lying at the heart of Western representations of Tibet. It is an ‘attempt to plot the trajectories of a few of the flights of fancy and imagination that have been launched from “Tibet”’ (Lopez 1998: 12). Without denying that the romantic Tibet is

³ While discussing a series of books on Tibet written by Italian explorers between the 1930s and 1950s, Loredana Polezzi (1998) argues that by operating shifts in such narrative devices as authorial voice and tense structure, their English translations modified the relationships between narrator, reader and object of the narration, thus appropriating the texts and rewriting them in accordance with the conventions of the English travel writing tradition, the

also a 'real place, an independent state under illegal, wrathful occupation' (Abbots 1997: xiii), I argue that in the Western imagination, the 'real Tibet' played only a subsidiary role.⁴

Third, my analysis of 'texts' that constitute Exotica Tibet affirms Edward Said's digression from Foucault in *Orientalism* in terms of the role of individuals in discourse production.

Unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism. The unity of the large ensemble of texts I analyze is due in part to the fact that they frequently refer to each other: Orientalism is after all a system for citing works and authors ... Foucault believes that in general the individual text or author counts for very little; empirically, in the case of Orientalism (and perhaps nowhere else) I find this not to be so (1978: 23).

It considers texts as worldly as 'to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted' (Said 1983: 4).

The most significant characteristic of Exotica Tibet is its richness in terms of imageries and imaginaries. 'Tibet is, in Foucault's terms, a heterotopia, a plurality of often contradictory, competing, and mutually exclusive places simultaneously positioned on a single geographical location' (Bishop 2001: 204). Representations of Tibet range from extremely pejorative ('feudal hell') to extremely idealistic (Shangri-la). Tibet for some is a blank space⁵ upon which they can write their desire; for others, it is an overcoded space juggling the fantastic with utter simplicity. This richness is partly possible because Tibet was never colonised by any European power that may have led to the establishment of knowledge-producing institutions and the consequent

expectations of the British public, and the discourse of Empire (or, later, the post-colonial discourse of tourism).

⁴ Said's take on Orientalism is that the West always sustains flexible positional superiority vis-à-vis the 'Orient'. However, according to Peter Bishop, 'Tibet seemed always to have the ability slightly to elude the total embrace of Western Orientalism. It always sustained an independent Otherness, a sense of superiority, albeit limited...The place of Tibet had a logic of its own, its *genius loci*. Tibet was not a silent Other', it was alive, substantial, and compelling' (1989: 145, 251).

⁵ One aspect of the story of 'Tibet as a blank space' is the denial of any quintessential Tibetan civilisation. Many commentators commented that what passes as 'Tibetan' is merely a mix of 'great' neighbouring civilisations (Chinese and Indian). William W. Rockhill is typical: 'Present advanced degree of civilization is entirely borrowed from China, India, and possibly

disillusionment with the fantasy. Because Tibet did not become a European colony, many of Europe's fantasies about India and China, dispelled by colonialism, made their way across the mountains to an idealised Tibet (Lopez 1998: 6).

Till the beginning of the twentieth century it was seen as an absence on the map, the 'last country to be discovered by the civilized world' (Landon 1905, Vol. I: xi). This was also because it 'was never the actual place [of Tibet] that fired the imagination of romantic seekers: it was the idea of Tibet, far away, impenetrable, isolated in the higher spheres of the earth. To see the real thing was to destroy the illusion' (Buruma 2001). Wholly pre-digested facts about Tibetans are often of the proverbial kind. Tibet is seen as the quintessential Asia of the Western imagination, the poor oppressed land with an ancient culture and spirit (Lee 1996: 22). Exotica Tibet is full of contrasts and superlatives.

This richness of imaginal diversity also lends itself to ambivalence and contradiction. Typical is Frederick O'Connor's statement: 'Every Tibetan, high or low, is a curiosity who ought to be in a museum. His salutations, gestures, clothing, and general *tout ensemble*, stamp him as something apart from the rest of the inhabitants of the globe. Yet with all this they are a highly civilized race' (in Sharma and Sharma 1996: 192). Exotica Tibet is a site of the play of opposites: the pristine and the polluted, the authentic and the derivative, the holy and the demonic, the good and the bad. At the turn of the twentieth century, colonialists saw lamas as 'an incarnation of all vices and corruptions, instead of the souls of the departed Lamas...[a hundred years on, some argue that Tibetan] gross national product of enlightened persons must have been proportionately higher than any other country ever' (Ekai Kawaguchi and Robert Thurman quoted in Lopez 1998: 9). Harrison Forman wrote in 1936, 'in the heart of ageless Asia, brooding darkly in the shadow of the unknown, is to be found a veritable explorer's paradise – Tibet, the strange and fascinating, forbidden land of magic and mystery...where the opposites are kin and the extremes go hand in hand' (1936: vii).

As Slavoj Žižek writes:

Today Tibet increasingly plays the role of such a fantasmatic Thing (the fantasy formation to which we refer when we talk about Tibet), of a jewel which, when one approaches it too much turns into the excremental object. It is a commonplace to claim that the fascination exerted by Tibet on the Western imagination, especially on

Turkestan, and Tibet has only contributed the simple arts of the tent-dwelling herdsmen' (1895: 673).

the broad public in the USA, provides an exemplary case of the ‘colonization of the imaginary’: it reduces the actual Tibet to a screen for the projection of Western ideological fantasies. The very inconsistency of this image of Tibet, with its direct coincidence of opposites seems to bear witness to its fantasmatic status. Tibetans are portrayed as people leading a simple life of spiritual satisfaction, fully accepting their fate, liberated from the excessive craving of the Western subject who is always searching for more, AND as a bunch of filthy, cheating, cruel, sexually promiscuous primitives... The social order is presented as a model of organic harmony, AND as the tyranny of the cruel corrupted theocracy keeping ordinary people ignorant. Tibetan Buddhism itself is simultaneously hailed as the most spiritual of all religions, the last shelter of the ancient wisdom, AND as the utmost primitive superstition, relying on prayer wheels and similar cheap magic tricks... This oscillation between jewel and shit is not the oscillation BETWEEN the idealized ethereal fantasy and the raw reality: in such an oscillation, BOTH extremes are fantasmatic, i.e. the fantasmatic space is the very space of this immediate passage from one extreme to the other. The first antidote against this topos of the raped jewel, of the isolated place of people who just wanted to be left alone, but were repeatedly penetrated by foreigners, is to remind ourselves that Tibet was already IN ITSELF an antagonistic, split society, not an organic Whole whose harmony was disturbed only by external intruders... [The second antidote is] to denounce the split nature of the Western image of Tibet as a ‘reflexive determination’ of the split attitude of the West itself, combining violent penetration and respectful sacralization (Zizek 2001b: 64-6; capitalisation in original).

Thus, as discussed earlier in Chapter 3 and 4, Tibet is represented as a ‘true *complexio oppositorum*, a rich complexity of contradictions and oppositions’ (Bishop 1989: 63).

5A. Imperialism

‘And there are in them [Tibetans] latent potentialities for good, which only await the right touch to bring them into being’ (Younghusband 1910: 321).

Contemporary newspaper reports about Tibet usually start off with the history of the ‘drastic opening’ of Tibet in 1950 with the Chinese invasion. This reveals a practice of historical amnesia as they rarely mention the destabilising influence of Western imperialism in pre-1950s Tibet or the way in which Tibet was abandoned by the West at the time of the Chinese invasion.⁶ In the creation of Tibet’s international profile, British imperialism played a formative part. The imagination of Tibet as a place and its historical status vis-à-vis China are linked through Western imaginative and

⁶ An example of this can be seen in *Lonely Planet*’s (2002) introduction to Tibet:

Locked away in its Himalayan fortress, Tibet has long exercised a unique hold on the imagination of the West: ‘Shangri-La’, ‘the Land of Snows’, ‘the Rooftop of the World’, Tibet is mysterious in a way that few other places are. Tibet’s strategic importance, straddling the Himalaya between China and the Indian subcontinent, made it irresistible to China who invaded in 1950.

No mention is made of the British attempts to ‘open’ Tibet.

imperial practices.⁷ This creation of Tibet was ‘always related to the growth of British imperialism, but it was never wholly determined by it...[for it]...was also a mythological event’ (Bishop 1989: 148).

The beginning of the twentieth century saw British imperialism in its heyday, firmly established on the Indian subcontinent. However, Tibet remained tantalisingly outside the arena of European scrutiny for it was ‘closed’ to ‘foreigners’. The best the British could do was to have a ‘peep’ at the land that lay ahead across the Himalayas. As the British Empire consolidated in India throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the blurred boundary between India and Tibet increasingly acquired greater significance. Tibet began to be represented as a place set apart, a place where ambivalence ruled: the Dalai Lama was respected, yet the monasticism was suspected; the Tibetans were liked, but their dirt and their customs – such as polyandry – evoked distaste; the austerity of the landscape was considered inspirational, but its barrenness was abhorred. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Britain was attempting to communicate with Lhasa less in order to reach Peking (as during late eighteenth and early nineteenth century) and more to improve its own Himalayan trade and stabilise Himalayan politics (Bishop 1989: 86-94). However, all attempts by the British to establish some sort of communication with the Tibetan authority both directly and via the Chinese failed. It was with the Russian expansion in Central Asia and the perception of Lord Curzon (the British viceroy in India) of Russian intrigue in Tibet⁸ that the British decided to ignore Chinese claims to suzerainty and undertake concrete ‘action’ (a blending of negotiation and force) firmly to show Tibetans their place in the larger scheme of things – as secondary to British imperial interest. This was done through the mission led by Colonel Francis Younghusband in 1903-04.

⁷ In his ‘Five point peace plan for Tibet’ (in an address to the United States Congress in 1987), the Dalai Lama talks of Tibet’s ‘strategic position in the heart of Asia’ and ‘its natural role as a buffer state maintaining and promoting peace in Asia’ (quoted in Barnett 1991: 286-7). This borrows heavily from the British imperial discourse in the Himalayan region where the concept of ‘buffer state’ occupied an increasingly important place in the frontier imagination and policy.

⁸ As Tatiana Shaumian points out,

Russian authorities never contemplated direct military intervention in Tibet, nor did they nurture plans to conquer India, but skilfully and often successfully exploited the Tibetan question to exert pressure on Great Britain and thereby obtain concessions in other regions that were more germane to their military-strategic and other political interests (2000: viii).

During the turn of the last century, there were two phases in British India's policy towards Tibet, the watershed being Curzon's telegram of January 8, 1903. In the first phase, Curzon tried a policy of direct approach, which failed. That 'the Dalai Lama had the temerity, one had almost say the cheek, to return the Indian Grand Mughal's letters unopened was sufficient cause, in Curzon's eyes, for a march to Lhasa, if only to show the Tibetan barbarians some elementary rules of human behaviour, of a code of (international) conduct!' (in Mehra 1968: 360). To rub salt into this wound, the British saw that the Dalai Lama had little hesitation in despatching missions to Russia. This was the time of the 'Great Game', intense rivalry between British and Russians in Asia, and some 'players' of this game such as Curzon pushed for a more active, confrontational policy.

In his famous Jan 8, 1903 despatch, Curzon mentions his two failed attempts (the third attempt was being made) to get in personal touch with the Dalai Lama; the failure of measures to 'materially' improve British position on the border; persistent rumours about the Russo-Chinese deal; and his own conviction that 'some sort of relations' existed between Russia and Tibet, changing the scenario:

We regard the so-called suzerainty of China over Tibet as a constitutional fiction – a political affectation which has only been maintained because of its convenience to both parties. China is always ready to break down the barriers of ignorance and obstruction, to open Tibet to the civilizing influence of trade, but her pious wishes are defeated by the short-sighted stupidity of the Lamas. In the same way, Tibet is only too anxious to meet our advances, but she is prevented from doing so by the despotic veto of the suzerain. This solemn farce has been re-enacted with the frequency that seems never to deprive it of its attractions or its power to impose (Mehra 1968: 161).

The second phase was thus marked by strong advocacy of an armed mission. It was then that the Tibet missions were formed and sent (there were two missions, one after another when attempts to negotiate at the border region failed). It resulted in what was benignly called an 'expedition', but was in practice an 'invasion' of Tibet. The culmination was a treaty signed in Lhasa in 1904 seeking to establish British India's relation with Tibet on a concrete basis. Though quite a few gains made here were soon given up by the British government in the name of international diplomacy (which also showed a disapproval of Younghusband for exceeding his briefs), this became a watershed event. Tibet was brought into the international arena, much against the wishes of its rulers. This forced opening had hugely significant geo-political impacts, the most important being increased Chinese awareness of vulnerability at its 'backdoor'. Ironically, the Chinese central government sought to establish firm control

over Tibet (first during the immediate aftermath of British invasion, and then from 1949 onward), ignoring its own history of a more loosely defined relationship with Tibet. The British mission also put Tibet firmly within the British imperial imagination. In terms of attitude towards Tibet, it was preceded and accompanied by a mix of abhorrence (with the 'priest-ridden' system) and fascination (with the nature and simplicity of common people). This ambivalence remained integral to Exotica Tibet during the duration of British imperial rule on the Indian subcontinent.

Commentators differed in their evaluation of Tibet, but they more or less shared a sense of paternalism towards it.⁹ For Graham Sandberg, though there was no imperative of establishing relations with Tibet as a colony and Tibetans were 'naturally peace-loving', 'the development of the natural resources of the country...under British auspices and assistance would, besides, forge a clasp to the bond [between British India and Tibet] in the shape of self-interest' (1904: 4). Writing in the aftermath of the massacre at Guru during the Lhasa expedition (see chapter 4), Perceval Landon said,

[o]ther things had no less weight in our favour; the resistance of the Tibetans had been blown away before us like leaves in autumn, and there was not a man in the country who did not realise that our care of the wounded afterwards, was as thorough as the punishment we inflicted at the moment. Trade and credit are proverbially plants of slow growth, and slower in the East than anywhere else (in Sharma and Sharma 1996: 35).

Edmund Candler, in the fashionable 'Darwinist' argument used for conquering the less industrialised countries, argued: 'They must come into line; it is the will of the most evolved' – the British – 'lord of all these by virtue of his race, the most evolved...' (quoted in Winnington 1957: 156).

Accounts of Tibet proliferated in the aftermath of the British invasion. They include Landon's *Lhasa*, Candler's *The Unveiling of Lhasa*, L Austine Waddell's *Lhasa and its mysteries*, *To Lhasa at last* written under the pseudonym of Powell Millington,

⁹ When analysing the Younghusband invasion, most contemporary writing adopts a patronising attitude towards Tibet, contrasting 'ferocious' modern British Indian army with the peace-loving innocent Tibetans. It might be an endearing notion, but is one 'that has the effect of politically castrating (*sic*) the Tibetan people by turning them into the helpless victims of (depending on your ideological view) monkish oppression or external aggression' (French 1995: 219). For instance, as Dawa Norbu points, during negotiations, for Tibetans, 'stonewalling seemed a fair way of expressing their policy of non-cooperation...moral refusal to communicate' (in French 1995: 225). Younghusband (Mehra 1968: 221-2) considered the same lama negotiators as 'lowbred, insolent, rude and intensely hostile'. Imperial arrogance made the British exasperated with the Tibetan resistance through 'foot-dragging'.

and Ottley's *With Mounted Infantry in Tibet*. Four years later, John Murray publishers brought out Younghusband's own account in *India and Tibet*. The British government brought out four official 'Blue books'. Later Frederick O'Connor and the Reuters correspondent Henry Newman brought out accounts sympathetic to Younghusband (Hopkirk 1983: 196-7). Younghusband's book is typical of imperial literature¹⁰ seeking to give an account of his journey to Tibet. I shall take *India and Tibet* as the first cultural site where Exotica Tibet reveals its interlinkages with British imperialism. Here modes of essentialism and stereotyping, as well as representational strategies of gaze, debasement, negation, moralisation, infantilisation, and self-affirmation are prominent.

5A.i. Younghusband's 'India and Tibet': an imperial descriptive account

India and Tibet (1910) purports to provide a history of the relations which have existed between the India and Tibet from the time of Warren Hastings (late eighteenth century) to 1910, with a particular account of the 1904 mission to Lhasa. This history is different from a history of the exploration of Tibet: it is one of the British aiming towards the 'the establishment of ordinary neighbourly intercourse with Tibet' (vii) and Tibetans refusal to oblige. William W. Rockhill's observation about Sino-Tibetan interaction seems to mirror Younghusband's own opinion: that 'the Tibetans have no desire for total independence from China, but that their complaints have always been directed against the manner in which the local Chinese officials have performed their duties' (viii). Even after signing the treaty, he makes it clear that Chinese suzerainty was fully recognised in the Adhesion Agreement¹¹ and China was not included as a 'foreign power' (286)

Reflecting the attitude of a 'pioneer' and 'frontiersman', the account is full of resentment against bureaucratic and political control exercised by the imperial

¹⁰ Though it seems that Younghusband was losing touch with political realities of British imperialism. He can be considered as the last of the major players in the Great Game who failed to understand 'the Greater Game of twentieth-century European power politics. Tibet was a pawn to be manipulated according to the requirements of big power politics. The Game, a strategic one rather than a tactical one, was suddenly being played in the chanceries of Europe, not in the deserts of trans-Himalaya' (MacGregor 1970: 351).

¹¹ The Younghusband invasion culminated in Lhasa Convention being signed on 7 September 1904. However, this was modified and the treaty was renegotiated. Britain persuaded China to sign an Adhesion agreement in 1906, accepting the renegotiated terms of the Convention. A year later in 1907, the status of Tibet was further clarified in the Anglo-Russian Convention.

government over its agents. Nostalgia is expressed for some golden era when the agents of imperialism were left free to pursue their 'destiny' without interference. Sarcastic about the centralisation of power in London, he says that 'the next mission to Lhasa will in all probability be led by a clerk from the Foreign Office in London' (103). Expressing an aristocratic disdain for 'democracy', he says that 'as long as what an officer in the heart of Asia may do is contingent on the "will" of "men in the street" of grimy manufacturing towns in the heart of England, so long as our action be slow, clumsy, and hesitating, when it ought to be sharp and decisive' (133).

Younghusband is very conscious of the importance of credibility in maintaining imperial rule. For him, it was important to combat Russian intrigue in Tibet, as its loss would have been perceived by bordering Asiatic powers as a sign of British weakness and of Russian supremacy. Each member of the mission had to take with him his full-dress uniform as 'ceremonial effect...is an item never to be lightly passed over in dealings with Asiatics' (98). When signing the treaty in Potala Palace, Younghusband ordered every one to dress in full regalia in order to impress the Tibetans: '...those who have lived among Asiatics know that the fact of signing the treaty in the Potala was of as much value as the Treaty itself' (302). Troops lined up the road to the Potala and 'a battery to fire salute or to bombard the Palace, as occasion might require, was stationed in a suitable position' (303). In a typical imperial fashion, Younghusband places the onus of responsibility for invasion on Tibetans themselves. British activist policy was in response to what he calls 'the aggression of the Tibetans and their vassals that took place first' (92-3).

The invasion was seen as an adventure: when Younghusband received the news that he was to go on the mission, he was elated – 'Here, indeed, I felt was the chance of my life. I was once more alive. The thrill of adventure again ran through my veins' (96). When he left Darjeeling for Chumbi, he says, 'To me there was nothing but the stir and thrill of an enterprise, which would ever live in history' (152). Reflecting a close relation between imperial adventures and scientific pursuits, he describes how at Khamba Jong, while some went out to shoot antelopes and *Ovis ammon*, others went 'botanizing or geologizing'; later he went with 'Mr Hayden to hunt for fossils, with Captain Walton to collect birds, and Colonel Prain to collect plants' (123).

Imperialists were flexible (opportunist?) in their perception of natives. The latter were seen as inherently divided (as in the case of Indians, who were perceived as Hindus and Muslims, lacking any 'Indian' identity) or inherently united depending on the requirement. When the deputation from Tashi Lama requested Younghusband to withdraw to Yatung or across the frontier, as they were being held responsible by the Lhasan authority, he made it clear that 'we must regard Tibetans as all one people, and hold them responsible for the actions of each' (124). Contrary to the self-perception of Tibetans, the British imposed a pan-Tibetan identity.

The mode of trivialising and infantilising natives is evident as Younghusband says that the impression left on him was that the Tibetans, 'though excessively childish, were very pleasant, cheery people, and individually, probably quite well disposed towards us' (124). He says how he tried again and again to reason with the obstinate Tibetans who refused to recognise the might of the British: '... when I saw these people so steeped in ignorance of what opposing the might of the British Empire really meant, I felt it my duty to reason with them up to the last moment, to save them from the results of their ignorance' (163). At Guru, he mentions 'Tibetans huddled together like a flock of sheep', and the Lhasa General as 'simply childish' and as having 'completely lost his head' (177-8). Like his other contemporaries, Younghusband considered the 'ignorant', 'arrogant', and 'fanatical' priests as the root of all evil. He writes that the Tibetan general and soldiers had no antipathy, but a fanatical Lama from Lhasa forced them. 'Ignorant and arrogant, this priest herded the superstitious peasantry to destruction' (179).

It seems that the Tibetan delegates, who came to negotiate before the mission finally entered Lhasa, had a better understanding of imperialism. They argued that it was Tibetan custom to keep all the strangers out, otherwise following the British, other nations too would want to go to Lhasa, and establish their agents (as they did in China). In contrast, speaking from the lofty heights of an 'internationalism' that was based on imperial arrogance, Younghusband

reminded them that they lived apart from the rest of the world, and did not understand the customs of international discourse. To us the fact of their having kept the representative of a great Power waiting for a year to negotiate was a deep insult, which most Powers would resent by making war without giving any further chance for negotiation. But the British Government disliked making war if they could possibly help it (229).

Within Orientalist frame of thinking, expertise in cultures of the Other lies with the imperialists, not the natives of the culture. In this vein, Younghusband used Waddell's presence in his team to present to the Tibetans 'an expert on Buddhism'. Of course, this expert found Tibetan practice to be a degenerate form of Buddhism and declined to revise his earlier work on Tibetan Buddhism (Waddell 1975/1895) as, according to him, his experiences merely served to reinforce his beliefs.

In what became a tradition amongst later travellers to Lhasa, Younghusband describes the first sight of Potala Palace in a dramatic fashion:

And then we saw, rising steeply on a rocky prominence in the midst of the valley, a fort-like dominating structure, with gilded roofs, which we knew could be none other than the Potala, the palace of the Dalai Lama of Lhasa. The goal of so many travellers' ambitions was actually in sight! The goal, to attain which we had endured and risked so much, and for which the best efforts of so many had been concentrated, had now been won. Every obstacle which Nature and man combined could heap in our way had been finally overcome, and the sacred city, hidden so far and deep behind the Himalayan ramparts, and so jealously guarded from strangers, was full before our eyes (250).

Younghusband's general impression of Lhasa and its monk population, in contrast to ordinary Tibetans, is typical:

they were dirty, degraded lot, and all of us remarked how distinctly inferior they were to the ordinary peasantry and townsmen we met. The monks, as a rule, looked thoroughly lazy and sensual and effete; the countrymen and the petty traders in the town were hardy, cheery people, and as we rode through the city really paid very little attention to us (266).

He uses Ekai Kawaguchi's assessment of Tibetan monks to support his feeling that the lamas, both high and low, didn't leave a favourable impression – they were lazy, dirty, sexual deviants (312-3). By posing a contrast between the simple Tibetans and their hostile priestly overlords, the British could then pose themselves as the saviours of the masses.¹²

Distinct from the later day idealisations of Tibetan Buddhism for its pacifist character, Younghusband agrees that 'lamaism' had a pacifying effect, but has a different evaluation of this peace.

¹² This is similar to imperial interventions in other parts of the world. For instance, interventions in what was deemed as local 'traditional' customs was seen as civilising mission. As Gayatri Spivak points out in the case of British discourse on the practice of *sati* ('widow burning'), these interventions can be seen as cases where 'white men are saving brown women from brown men' (1988: 297).

But the peace that has been nurtured has been the quiescence of sloth and decadence. The Buddhist idea of repose and kindness all can appreciate...Yet the idea may have its danger and be as likely to lead downward as upward. It may lull to rest and render useless passions and energies which ought to be given play to. And the evil of Lamaism is that it has fostered lazy repose and self-suppression at the expense of useful activity and self-realization...Peace, instead of harmony, has been their ideal – peace for the emasculated individual instead of harmony for the united and full-blooded whole (314-5).

The pacifism of Tibetans is contrasted unfavourably with the masculine, energetic, and outward looking character of the British imperial project.

Reflecting ambivalence about the ‘natives’ that has been a defining feature of Western representations, Younghusband says:

Summarizing the characteristics of the Tibetans, we may say, then, that while they are affable outwardly and crafty within, as most dependent people have to be; while they are dirty and lazy; and while their religion is degraded, and they show no sign of either intellectual or spiritual progress, yet at heart they are not unkindly or unsociable people, and they have undoubtedly strong religious feelings. Immorality is not entirely unchecked ... (321).

Carrying on and reinforcing the tradition of Western travellers to Tibet, Younghusband experienced an epiphany in Tibet. For a moment, a mystic Younghusband subsumed the imperialist Younghusband. At a camp outside Lhasa, he went off alone to the mountains and in his own words ‘gave myself up to all the emotions of this eventful time’. As he writes, from the city came the Lama’s words of peace and not hatred and

I was insensibly suffused with an almost intoxicating sense of elation and good-will. This exhilaration of the moment grew and grew till it thrilled through me with overpowering intensity. Never again could I think of evil, or ever again be enemy with any man. All nature and all humanity were bathed in a rosy glowing radiancy; and life for the future seemed nought but buoyancy and light...and that single hour on leaving Lhasa was worth all the rest of a lifetime (326-7).

Tibet seems to have had a transformative effect on the hardened imperialist.¹³

Younghusband’s account is critical of the home government for not pursuing Curzon’s activist Tibetan policy and giving up many gains made in the Lhasa convention. His commitment to increased Anglo-Tibetan interaction, however, is not based on equality but on patronage, as is clear from this statement:

¹³ In fact, after his Lhasa expedition Younghusband involved himself in non-conventional mystical activities. In an obituary to Younghusband, the *New York Times* merged the man who had led the British invasion with the Hollywood myth: ‘If as James Hilton strongly suggests in *Lost Horizon*, Shangri-La is somewhere in Tibet rather than merely somewhere – anywhere...then Sir Francis Younghusband probably came closer than anyone else to being Robert Conway’ (French 1995: 202).

I favour forward policy, which simply recognises that *great civilized* Powers cannot by any possibility permanently ignore and disregard *semi-civilized* peoples on their borders, but must inevitably establish, and in time regularize, intercourse with them, and should therefore seize opportunities of *humanizing* that intercourse ... (428, emphases added).

Thus *India and Tibet* reflects many characteristics that were typical of imperial literature on Tibet during the time. It shows Tibet as a land of contrasts (between the lamas and the common people) and a land of religion (if a degraded one). It indulges in modes of representation including stereotyping, essentialism, and exoticism as well as various representational strategies, particularly gaze, debasement, moralisation, infantilisation, and self-affirmation. Various themes of Exotica Tibet, such as those connected to religion, the lama figure, Potala, travel adventure, epiphany, and so on, are present. In contrast to later works that utilise Tibet as a site for self-criticism, Younghusband's account is mainly about self-affirmation, a defence of the British imperial project as ennobling for the British and as civilising for others.

5B. Tibet: a land of religion

'In Tibet religion always comes first, and God, says a Tibetan proverb, can only be approached through a lama' (Chapman 1992: 195).

Tibet's association with religion can be traced back to the early modern age when the first Western travellers were mostly Christian missionaries.¹⁴ The Western assessment of religion as the main, if not the sole, defining feature of Tibetan life and culture has differed over time. Western missionaries as well as many travellers, especially in the beginning of the twentieth century, considered it barbaric and degenerate. However, as

¹⁴ Missionaries had their own romantic vision of Tibet, often emphasising the darker aspects of Tibetan culture in order to highlight the country's need for Christian enlightenment. Rijnharts (Petrus and Susie Rijnhart) mentioned the goal of their missionary travel as 'perpetuating and deepening the widespread interest in the evangelization of Tibet' for 'much has [been] written of the heathen in other countries...but the Tibetans with their monstrous butter Buddha occupy a unique place in the world's idolatry' (Rijnhart 1901: 1, 119). After all, Lhasa is not 'only a city of metaphysical mysteries and the mummery of idol-worship; it is a secret chamber of crime; its rock and its road, its silken flags and its scented altars, are all stained with blood' (Carey 1902: 58). Monastic rapacity and domination along with criticisms of Tibetan sexual morality were common themes in missionary writings. They saw themselves as 'soldiers of Christ' and Tibet as a citadel under siege (Bray 2001: 28). However, by the late twentieth century, missionary accounts show much greater empathy and sometimes a deep cultural understanding.

the century progressed and self-doubts were raised regarding the merits of Christianity as well as secularism in the West, Tibetan Buddhism¹⁵ came to be idealised.

A common feature of Western accounts of Tibet is the recognition and emphasis on the centrality of religion in Tibetan lives. As Marco Pallis wrote, the 'defining feature of Tibet is that the Buddhist tradition is everything' (1974: 301).¹⁶ This observation is common amongst contemporary commentators too; Melvyn Goldstein writes, 'the commitment of Tibet as a religious state and to the universality of religion as the core metaphor of Tibetan national identity' is a major factor underlying Tibet's inability to adapt to changing circumstances (1989: 2).¹⁷ Though a homogeneous force in Tibetan politics in one sense, religion has also had a fragmenting influence.

For most Western commentators until the beginning of the twentieth century, the Tibetan 'preoccupation' with religion was irrational, superstitious, and downright degenerate (at least when compared to classical Buddhism). This unfavourable comparison between Tibetan and classical Buddhism is not surprising: the latter is a hypostatised object, created by Europe, and controlled by it. It was against this classical Buddhism that all Buddhisms of modern Orient were to be judged, and found lacking (Lopez 1998: 7). Lamaism was the most degenerate and inauthentic of all. This sentiment is clearly reflected in Waddell's work, which is characterised by modes of stereotyping and essentialism and representational strategies of gaze, classification, debasement, negation, moralisation, and self-affirmation. In contrast, the *'Tibetan book of the dead'*, the second cultural site I examine, is marked by modes of

¹⁵ Though Tibet is mainly associated with a variant of Buddhism or 'Lamaism', there were quite a few practising Muslims living in Lhasa (mostly and elsewhere). In most of the studies on Tibetan culture, the contribution of Tibetan Muslims is largely ignored. For exceptions, see Sheikh 1991; Siddiqui 1991; *The Tibet Journal* 1995.

¹⁶ A common theme in many early travel writings is comments on the similarity between Tibetan Buddhism and Roman Catholicism. For instance, for the British traveller Thomas Manning, the marshy land next to the Potala reminded of 'Pope, Rome, and what I had read of the Pontine Marshes' (Markham 1876: 255). Upon meeting Italian travellers Giuseppe Tucci and Fosco Maraini and being aware of tenets of Catholicism, Lama Nawang exclaims 'Bravo, bravo, then you're like us, you're a civilized people too!' (Maraini 1952: 170). For many British Protestants, this made Tibet open to some sort of 'Reformation'. As O'Connor writes, 'All that now remains is for a Tibetan Luther to appear upon the scene' (in Sharma and Sharma 1996: 194).

¹⁷ Western emphasis on the centrality of religion to Tibetan civilisation is also reflected in Tibetan self-perceptions. For instance, when charting an outline of Tibet's future, the Dalai Lama says, 'because religion constitutes the source of Tibet's national identity, and spiritual values lie at the very heart of Tibet's rich culture, it would be the special duty of the Government of Tibet to safeguard and develop its practice' (His Holiness 1988).

stereotyping, essentialism, and exoticism along with the strategies of differentiation, idealisation, affirmation, gerontification, and self-criticism.

5B.i. Waddell and the study of ‘degenerate’ ‘Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism’

Waddell, the foremost ‘expert’ on Tibetan Buddhism at the turn of the twentieth century, bolstered widespread negative images of Tibet ostensibly based on ‘scientific’ and ‘ethnographic’ foundations. He had the ‘right’ credentials to be an expert: he had learnt the Tibetan language, he sought to study the religion systematically and scientifically,¹⁸ and most importantly, he was a European man.

Waddell’s accounts of his journey into Tibetan religion (*The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism* 1895/1972) as well as into the Tibetan landscape (*Lhasa and its mysteries* 1905) is filled with references to a degenerate form of Buddhism, an exploitative priesthood, and a superstitious peasantry. He writes, ‘the bulk of the Lamaist cults comprise much deep-rooted devil-worship and sorcery...for Lamaism is only thinly and imperfectly varnished over with Buddhist symbolism, beneath which the sinister growth of poly-demonist superstition darkly appears’ (1972: xi). In Tibet, the impure form of Buddhism became ‘a disastrous parasitic disease which fastened on to the vitals of the land...a cloak to the worst form of oppressive devil-worship’ (1905: 25). At the same time, ‘lamaism’ is not all bad as ‘it preserves for us much of the old-world lore and petrified beliefs of our Aryan ancestors’ (1972: 4). In a typical blind imperialist un-selfreflexivity, Waddell finds the Tibetan Regent ‘hopelessly biased’ about the religion of the British (1905: 408), while viewing his own biases about the religion of the Tibetans as objectivity.

Waddell was a member of Younghusband’s expedition to Lhasa. Writing about the journey inside Tibet, he says that the enigma has been solved for the

fairly Prince of ‘Civilisation’ has roused her from her slumbers, her closed doors are broken down, her dark veil of mystery is lifted up, and the long-sealed shrine, with its grotesque cults and its idolised Grand Lama, shorn of his sham nimbus, have yielded up their secrets, and lie disenchanted before our Western eyes. Thus, alas! Inevitably, do our cherished romances of old pagan world crumble at the touch of our modern hands! (1905: 2)

¹⁸ Waddell even purchased a ‘Lamaist temple with its fittings; and prevailed on the officiating priests to explain ... in full detail the symbolism and the rites as they proceeded’ (1972: viii).

The account is filled with contradictions. While the text is replete with criticism of the ‘vampire priests’, ‘parasitic priesthood’, and ‘sheer barbarians’, it also expresses nostalgia for the enigma which was supposedly lost with the invasion and considers Tibet to have ‘charming land and interesting people’ (1905: 448). When visiting Yamdok Lake, Waddell mentions his pleasure at leaving warlike surroundings and entering ‘again the world of dreams and magic which may be said to be ever with us in the mystic Land of the Lamas’ (1905: 292-3). Again, upon approaching Lhasa, he compares the excitement and anticipation to ‘the emotions felt by the Crusaders of old on arriving within sight of Jerusalem, after their long march through Europe’ (1905: 326) and exclaims: ‘Here at last was the object of our dreams! – the long-sought, mysterious Hermit City, the Rome of Central Asia, with the residence of its famous priest-god – and it didn’t disappoint us!’ (1905: 330)

Taking a dig at the theosophist imagination of Tibet as the land of the mahatmas, he writes, ‘Thus we are told that, amidst the solitude of this “Land of the Supernatural” repose the spirits of “The Masters,” the *Mahatmas*, whose astral bodies slumber in unbroken peace, save when they condescend to work some petty miracle in the world below’ (1972: 3). In contrast, he mentions that Tibetans were entirely ignorant of any ‘Mahatmas’ living in Tibet, nor had they heard of any secrets of the ancient world being preserved in Tibet (1905: 409-10). Though many commentators disclaim the theosophist idealisation of Tibet and deploy the trope of debasement and negation on the lines of Waddell, over the course of the twentieth century, it is the idealisation of Tibetan religion that gained wider currency during the middle and later half of the twentieth century.

5B.ii. ‘*The Tibetan book of the dead*’

The *Tibetan book of the dead* has significantly contributed to the valorisation of Tibetan religion and to the Western imagination of Tibet as a land of spirituality. It is the most widely read ‘Tibetan’ text. It was allegedly written in the eighth or the ninth century and ‘discovered’ in the fourteenth. It organises the experiences of the *bar-do*, the ‘in-between’ – usually referring to the state between death and rebirth. It was introduced to the West by Walter Evans-Wentz in 1927 and

[f]rom its first incarnation in English in 1927, the work has taken on a life of its own as something of a timeless world spiritual classic. It has been made to serve wide-ranging agendas in various fields of use, agendas that have far more to do with the

twentieth-century cultural fashions of Europe and America than with how the text has been used over the centuries of its history in Tibet (Lopez 1998: 47).

The most idealised version comes with Robert Thurman who seeks to represent Tibetan Buddhism as scientific rather than religious. He dedicates the book

to the brave and gentle people of Tibet, who have suffered and are suffering one of the great tragedies of our time...[and prays that]...May the Tibetan people soon regain the sovereign freedom they have enjoyed since the dawn of history! And may the sunlight of Tibetan Spiritual Science once again shine brightly upon a freshened world! (1998)

In discussing the virtue of pacifism, Thurman argues that during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682), a unique form of government was created that was almost completely demilitarized and gave priority to nonviolence (9). He represents Tibet as a spiritual civilisation and says

[i]n Western culture, the last frontier of our material conquest is the universe of outer space. Our astronauts are our ultimate heroes and heroines. Tibetans, however, are more concerned about the spiritual conquest of the inner universe, whose frontiers are in the realms of death, the between, and contemplative ecstasies. So, the Tibetan lamas... [who are spiritually adept, the] 'psychonauts' are the Tibetans' ultimate heroes and heroines (10).

Drawing upon the themes of Western materialism and Eastern spirituality, Thurman points out that the unique psychological character complex that corresponds to the modern Tibetan society is 'inner modernity' as opposed to the Western psychological character complex, which can be described as 'outer modernity'. 'The modern Tibetan character complex shares the modern traits of individualism, openness and flexibility of identity, reflectiveness, and rationality ... [While] Western and Tibetan personalities share the complex of modernity of consciousness, they are diametrically opposed in outlook, one focused on matter and the other on mind' (11). This difference of personality underlies the difference between the Western (American for Thurman) and Tibetan civilisations: 'While the American national purpose is ever greater material productivity, the Tibetan national purpose is ever greater spiritual productivity' (11).

Thus, the idealisation of Tibetan spirituality often goes beyond everyday religious practice, concerning itself with realms beyond religion. As Tibetophile Hollywood actor Steven Segal says, '[m]y agenda has no politics. It has no economy. You see. It goes even beyond religion which is also big business and goes into simple human kindness and the way we're supposed to treat each other as human beings' (Frontline

1998c). A figure that has been integral to the Western imagination of Tibet as an abode of spirituality is the lama.

5C. The lama

‘The Andes llama, he’s a beast/The Tibet lama, he’s a priest’ (Holte 1991).

Younghusband, at the end of his time in Lhasa, writes about the Ti Rimpoche, the Ganden Abbot: he was a ‘benevolent, kindly old gentleman, who would not hurt a fly if he could have avoided it’ and ‘more nearly approached Kipling’s Lama in “Kim” than any other Tibetan” he had met (Younghusband 1910: 310, 325). Here we see how images of the represented shaped the encounters of the representer with her/his subject. Kipling’s lama provided an image of the Tibetan lama according to which the British during the early twentieth century judged actual lamas. With Younghusband begins the tradition of looking for the ‘Teshoo lama’ figure – elderly yet childlike, respected yet loved, spiritually wise yet with little knowledge of, or interest in, the secular world. The significance of Kipling’s *Kim* in introducing the figure of a benign lama into the Western imagination cannot be overemphasised. This facet of Exotica Tibet draws upon various modes and strategies of representation that we discussed in the previous chapter – stereotyping, exoticism, essentialism, idealisation, affirmation, chronopolitics, infantilisation, and gerontification.

5C.i. ‘Kim’ and the Teshoo lama

Kipling’s *Kim* (1896/1901) belongs to the genre of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century novel, which presents the ‘Oriental’ world for the visual and material consumption of the West. At once a spy thriller, a picaresque adventure narrative, a maturation story, and a quest for romance, *Kim*’s complexity comes, in part, from his curious stacking up of multiple genres. Simply put, the novel is about the ‘adventures’ of Kim – a white orphan boy who has grown up amongst Indians, easily passing himself off as one of them. He takes to the road as a *chela* (disciple, companion) of a Tibetan Lama and discovers the diversity of north Indian life while ‘becoming a man’. Initially, accompanying the lama on his search for the ‘fountain of wisdom’, he is then picked up by the British and groomed for working in the British secret service.

Though the depiction of individual ‘Oriental’ characters such as the Teshoo Lama is positive, it in no way disrupts the cumulative picture and the certainties of Orientalism. ‘For the general category... offers the specific instance a limited terrain in which to operate: no matter how deep the specific exception, no matter how much a single Oriental can escape the fences around him, he is *first* an Oriental, *second* a human being, and *last* again an Oriental’ (Said 1993: 112).

In *Kim*, it is the Europeans who provide the Orientals with the first accurate descriptions and proper explanations of their history, religion, and culture. This is evident in the confrontation of the lama with the British curator of Lahore museum (the Fountain of Wisdom). The curator, a ‘white-bearded Englishman’, speaks to the lama, who is trembling with excitement upon the sight of Buddhist images: ‘Welcome, then, O lama from Tibet. Here be the images, and I am here...to gather knowledge’ (1976: 13). The lama then tells of his monastery, where he was the abbot. In reply, the curator brings out a huge book of photos and showed him that very place, suitably impressing the lama who exclaims, ‘And thou- the English know of these things?’ (14). Yet, the lama is not totally convinced about British control over knowledge, for he says that there are still things that Western scholars do not know, have not sought for – things relating to spiritual wisdom. Later, the lama introduces Kim to new art forms and chuckles: ‘The Sahibs have not *all* this world’s wisdom’ (209, emphasis in original). The attitude of the curator and lama expresses well the tension and polarity within Exotica Tibet – science, technology and power (possession of the West) versus spiritual wisdom and mystery (possession of the East in general, and Tibet in particular) (Bishop 1989: 190).¹⁹

Throughout the book, Tibet lingers on the border almost beyond the reach of those in India. When the lama enters the story he says to the boys that he is ‘a hillman from hills thou’lt never see’ (Kipling 1976: 12) coming from hills where ‘the air and water are fresh and cool’ (11). On their journey he tells stories of ‘enduring snows, landslips, blocked passes, the remote cliffs where men find sapphires and turquoise, and the

¹⁹ On the issue of Western technology versus Eastern spirituality, ironically, while in 1939, Carl Gustav Jung wrote in his *Psychological commentary on The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*: ‘yoga in Mayfair or Fifth Avenue, or in any other place which is on the telephone, is a spiritual fake’, in 1921, in accordance with the wishes of the Tibetan government, Lhasa was connected to the telegraph and by 1940 Lhasa had its first telephone (Bishop n.d).

wonderful upland road that leads at last into Great China itself' (48). Later, on the second leg of their journey

he told stories, tracing with a finger in the dust, of the immense and sumptuous ritual of avalanche-guarded cathedrals; of processions and devil-dances; of the changing of monks and nuns into swine; of holy cities fifteen thousand feet in the air; of intrigue between monastery and monastery; of voices among the hills, and of that mysterious mirage that dances on dry snow. He spoke even of Lhasa and of the Dalai Lama, whom he had seen and adored (232).

One dominant representational strategy operating within the text is infantilisation. On the one hand, young Kim is contrasted to the old lama. But a closer reading shows Kim to be the real guardian and caretaker as he is practically wise and the lama is child-like in worldly matters. The lama writes in 'clumsy, childish print' (13) and follows Kim's instructions obediently and 'simply as a child' (20). Kim asserts his own importance for the lama when he says to him: 'Was there ever such a disciple as I? ... All earth would have picked thy bones within ten mile of Lahore city if I had not guarded thee' (71). Yet, when it came to crisis points such as when Kim is caught by two British regimental priests, the lama shows awareness of worldly matters in volunteering to act as Kim's financial guardian while he is schooled.

The lama's wisdom in spiritual matters was of course unparalleled and compared favourably with Indian priests of all sorts. He spoke like a 'scholar removed from vanity, as a Seeker walking in humility, as an old man, wise and temperate, illuminating knowledge with brilliant insight' (232). Ultimately, the lama finds his 'fountain of wisdom' (the 'river of the arrow') in his affection for Kim and 'saves' Kim from his illness through his meditation. He says 'Son of my Soul, I have wrenched my Soul back from the Threshold of Freedom to free thee from all sin – as I am free, and sinless!' (313). Tibet comes to the aid of the West to rejuvenate it spiritually.

The benign figure of the lama, the one with a 'loving old soul' (207), does not preclude Kipling from expressing the general disagreement with Tibetan religion that was prevalent amongst Europeans during the turn of the twentieth century. Kipling's lama figure expresses his anguish that the 'Old law' – primitive Buddhism – 'was not well followed; being overlaid...with devildom, charms, and idolatry' (15).

Even though some might find in the figure of Teshoo lama a charitable depiction of an 'Oriental' (see Hopkirk 1997), yet even he, the most sympathetic of holy men, is seen as childish, unthinking and incapable – to the point of self-destruction – of existence in the real world. This portrayal of the lama results from strategies of simplified idealisation and ambivalence. From his early function as a father figure for Kim, he gradually reveals his practical inadequacies, as his childlike dependence on Kim grows more explicit. Later in the novel, as compared to the Western father figures of Colonel Creighton and Father Victor – the men combining power and 'worldly' knowledge – the lama's virtue and behaviour increasingly appear gendered as feminine and thus ineffectual. In contrast to the lama's (maternal) attachment, love, and delight in Kim and in contrast to the lama's unreserved love, his new fathers initiate a regime of discipline (Sullivan 1993: 160-1). Throughout the novel Kipling shows that the lama, while a wise and good man, needs Kim's youth, his guidance, his wits; the lama even explicitly acknowledges his absolute, religious need for Kim. In spite of its yearnings for all that the lama represents, the rhetoric and the logic of novel finally draw Kim away from the margins and returns him to the centre of imperial surveillance and power as a spy. And the lama, as the ultimately idealised Other who exemplifies uncorrupted goodness, innocence and nature, must finally be stereotyped, feminised and mystified as the eternally deferred and static object of colonial desire (*Ibid.*: 26). Thus, Kim's search for identity as well as his love for the lama is both mediated by the ruling structures of power.

Angus Wilson surmises why Kipling used the character of a Tibetan lama and not any other religious figure: it was essential to the spiritual relation that was to develop between the lama and Kim that, for Kim, his master be an exotic novelty, for the boy's curiosity about everything new is what marks him out as someone who is likely to learn from life (Wilson 1987: 53). The lama provides exactly this. His simplicity and novelty allowed Kim to claim that 'the lama was his trove, and he proposed to take possession' (Kipling 1976: 19). And then, it was also necessary that the master should be entirely dependent upon Kim for guidance in the real world. The Tibetan lama symbolised radical 'otherworldliness'.

5C.ii. The Dalai Lama

Over the century, the Tibetan lama figure has come to be crystallised in the figure of the Grand Lama, the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lamas have been invested not only with the desires of their Tibetan followers, but also with those of Westerners. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Dalai Lama was an enigma. The Younghusband expedition presented the British public with the idea of the Dalai Lama as the ‘mysterious god-king of Tibet, embodying a line of spiritual predecessors vaguely envisaged as stretching back into the mists of history’ (Richardson 1998: 382). The fact that during the Lhasa invasion the Dalai Lama fled Tibet and was therefore beyond the control of the British added to the enigma.²⁰

As the twentieth century has drawn to a close, the Western version of the Dalai Lama as a personification of Tibet has taken a literal form. ‘Real Tibet dream comes when you meet his Holiness because then – it’s actualized’ (Gere, in Frontline 1998b). Journalistic accounts of meeting with him tend to find elements of Tibetanness in his body or attire or laugh. ‘The Dalai Lama embodies Tibetan culture and Tibetan cause; he provides the refugees with a concrete example of how to live by the abstract values of their culture’ (Forbes 1989: 160).²¹

That Sino-Tibetan conflict has come to revolve around the interpretation of the Dalai Lama as an individual is evident from Bill Clinton’s statement in Beijing: ‘I have spent time with the Dalai Lama, I believe him to be an honest man, and I believe that if he had a conversation with President Jiang Zemin, they would like each other very

²⁰ When the thirteenth Dalai Lama was interviewed for the first time in 1911 by William Ellis for *The Continent*, a Presbyterian paper, the interviewer was not deeply impressed. ‘His face is thoroughly pock-marked’, he wrote, ‘and his ears, which are large and pointed at the top, are his most noticeable feature. His moustache is waxed horizontally, while his head, in a lesser personage, would be called bullet-shaped’. Of the things the Lama had to talk about, the item that pleased his interviewer most was a statement that, upon returning to Tibet at the end of his long exile consequent upon the invasion of his land by the Younghusband expedition, he intended to send young Tibetan men to America for a Western education. There is not much hint of mysticism here but there is a reference to ‘strategic’ location of Tibet (‘Tibet’s living deity’ 1911).

²¹ Though Žižek does not conflate the Dalai Lama with Tibet, his criticism of the Dalai Lama’s reception in the West reflects a similar ignorance of the cultural specificity of the figure of the Dalai Lama. His critique of ‘postmodern times’ deploys the Dalai Lama’s ‘spiritualism’ crudely in order to compare it unfavourably with the figure of the Pope.

One can now understand why the Dalai Lama is much more appropriate for our postmodern permissive times: he presents us with a vague feel-good spiritualism without any specific obligations: anyone, even the most decadent Hollywood star, can follow him while continuing his or her money-grabbing promiscuous lifestyle... The Pope, in contrast, reminds us that there *is* a price to pay for a proper ethical attitude (Žižek 2001a: 181).

much' ('Clinton urges China' 1998). On the other hand, cynics like Rupert Murdoch support the Chinese occupation by attacking him: 'I have heard cynics who say he's a very political old monk shuffling around in Gucci shoes...It [old Tibetan society] was a pretty terrible old autocratic society out of the Middle Ages' ('Murdoch brands Dalai Lama' 1999). These representations fail to convey through their imagery a sense of the process by which the Dalai Lama comes to represent his constituency, or that the Tibet he represents is a 'political Tibet with a defined territory and customs, or a highly complex society in transition with a wide range of sectors and interests, and a rapidly changing social environment' (Barnett 2001: 300-1). Without denying the centrality of the figure of the Dalai Lama to the Tibetan civilisation, it can be argued that the current literalisation of the Dalai Lama as Tibet is intimately linked to the Western imagination and Western desires.

5D. Temporal and spiritual journeying to the 'rooftop of the world'

'I wonder what lies beyond [the Himalayas]?
...Mystery'
(Dr Roland's answer to the narrator, Geddie 1882: 9).

The *Lonely planet* travel guide to Tibet opens with a typical statement: 'Shangri-La, the Land of Snows, the Roof of the World; for centuries the mysterious Buddhist kingdom, locked away in its mountain fastness of the Himalayas, exercised a unique hold on the imagination of the West' (Taylor 1986: 9). Adventure and spirituality are integral parts of journeys into Tibet. Western travelogues highlight a sense of adventure, surprise, and an encounter with spirituality in travels into Tibet, particularly in journeys to Lhasa. Throughout the twentieth century, the notion of 'Tibet' has conjured images of access to its spiritual life as forbidding as any attempt to cross its earthly frontiers.²² One experiences here a sense of a peculiar 'mixture of wild, scarcely tamed passion and exquisitely detached refinement' (Batchelor 1987: 13). After examining the enchantment with Tibet in terms of its geographical location, 'closed' and 'forbidden' nature, and the reputation of Lhasa and its Potala palace, I shall look at two illustrations of travel writing and pick out elements of temporal and spiritual adventure. Apart from exoticism and stereotyping, the main representational

²² Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Tibetans had prohibited foreigners' access to Tibet, particularly to Lhasa.

strategies at work include gaze, naturalisation, spiritualisation, self-affirmation, and self-criticism.

One factor that explains the magnetic power of Tibet is its extreme remoteness from the West. When F. Spencer Chapman entered Tibet, he found it to be a 'world of immense distances' (1992: 32). It offers the opportunity to imagine a land of cherished ideals or a wasteland. For instance, the US War Department in 1947 could envisage only two possible 'uses for Tibet: 'as a country offering great waste areas in which rockets could be tested, or as a final retreat (Shangri-la) to which peace-loving people could flee when atomic war breaks, for Tibet is too remote to be of significance in any war' (quoted in Knaus 1999: 26).²³

Tibet's geographical features provide it with a uniquely 'fantastic' landscape. 'It has all the physical features of a true wonderland ... No description can convey the least idea of the solemn majesty, the serene beauty, the awe-inspiring wildness, the entrancing charm of the finest Tibetan scenes' (David-Neel 1936: 262). Docteur A. De Arsonval writes:

for many Westerners Tibet is wrapped in an atmosphere of mystery. The 'Land of Snows' is for them the country of the unknown, the fantastic and the impossible. What superhuman powers have not been ascribed to the various kinds of lamas, magicians, sorcerers, necromancers and practitioners of the occult who inhabit those high tablelands, and whom both nature and their own deliberate purpose have so splendidly isolated from the rest of the world? And how readily are the strangest legends about them accepted as indisputable truths! In that country plants, animals and human beings seem to divert to their own purposes the best established laws of physics, chemistry, physiology and even plain common sense (in David-Neel 1936: v-vi).

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the fact that it was 'closed' to Europeans added to the mystery of Lhasa and Tibet. The epithets of 'the Forbidden City' and the 'forbidden land' merely served to enhance the desire of individual Western travellers to defy the authorities. The 'race for Lhasa'²⁴ reached its peak at the

²³ John Kenneth Knaus further points out that the Americans naively operated with a frontier mentality, assuming the Tibetan situation to be the theatrical scene of a 'frontier drama with the good guys trying to get rid of bad guys' (1999: 61). According to him, 'The CIA men viewed their Tibetan pupils as Oriental versions of self-reliant, straight-shooting American frontiersmen who were under attack and seeking only the means to fight for their own way of life' (216). Ironically, this sentiment ignored that while in the American case, frontiersmen were the invaders, in the Tibetan case the 'Oriental frontiersmen' were the ones who suffered from Chinese invasion.

²⁴ Of course one had to be European/American to count in the quest for Lhasa. In this vein, Hopkirk argues that the Japanese monk Kawaguchi cannot be counted in the race for Lhasa as 'it had been from the start a rivalry between Westerners, starting with Nikolai Prejevalsky.

turn of the twentieth century, culminating in the British invasion in 1903-04. The closing of Tibet was 'an immediate challenge to adventurous explorers, intelligence officers and missionaries' most of whom made their entry surreptitiously, often in disguise, through some remote, thinly populated area of frontier. Amazingly, between 1792 and 1904 only one foreign explorer was killed and that was in a region beyond the control of Lhasa authorities (Richardson 1998: 416). Tibetans showed forbearance toward those foreigners who repeatedly tried to gatecrash their sacred places. Writing about A. Campbell (the Superintendent of Police of Darjeeling who tried to enter Tibet with Joseph Hooker, a naturalist), Alistair Lamb says he was 'badly smitten by what amounted to an occupational disease among British officials along the Tibet frontier, a burning desire to see for himself that mysterious and forbidden land whose tantalizing proximity to British territory was a continual challenge...' (1960: 94).

The opening of Tibet did not follow the British invasion: travel to Lhasa was severely restricted both by the Lhasa authority and the British Indian government. In fact, having been deported by Charles Bell after her illicit journey into Tibet around 1915, French traveller Alexandra David-Neel later wrote: 'What right had they to erect barriers around a country which was not even lawfully theirs?' (1991: xii). The cliché of forbidden Tibet can be seen even in one of the few commercial films made inside Tibet (the location is unclear) – *Tibet: Land of Isolation* (US, 1934) by James Fitzpatrick. This travelogue, which provides a commentary on everyday life, is essentially a catalogue of Western myths about Tibet. Its closing narrative is typical: 'And so life goes on among the people of Tibet where the progress of civilization is at the mercy of priestcraft and the destinies of men are eternally limited by impregnable boundaries of superstition, ignorance and fear. And it is with this thought that we say farewell to Tibet, land of isolation' (Hansen 2001: 96).

The 'forbidden' character of Tibet was etched even deeper in Western imagination when China occupied Tibet and long periods of effective and coercive isolation began. Though Tibet has been opened to travellers in limited numbers since the 1980s, severe

Without belittling their achievements, it has to be said that it was easier for the Asiatics and therefore the race was among the Europeans' (Hopkirk 1983: 157). This sentiment ignores that 'Asiatics' faced more dangers of being treated far more severely than the Europeans. 'Women, non-Europeans, lower classes (e.g. Cossacks with Prejevalsky), amateurs, eccentrics, mystics and younger people have all been dismissed at some time, in one way or another' (Bishop 1993: 36).

travel restrictions remain. Dodging Chinese authorities and encounters with ‘real’ Tibetans (as opposed to ‘Sinicised’ Tibetans) have become staples of most contemporary travel writing (see Magnusson 2002).

In most such writings, it is common to come across detailed description of the first sight of Lhasa in the form of the Potala Palace. The descriptions are usually exclamatory. For critics, ‘the Potala unconsciously symbolizes the vast erection of power and pride which separates the priestly caste of Tibet from the real truths of the religion they have prostituted’ (Landon quoted in Chapman 1992: 181) while for admirers, ‘the Potala represents the very essence of the Tibetan people. It has a certain untamed dignity in perfect harmony with the surrounding rugged country; a quality of stolid unchangeableness - it seems to say: “Here I have been for hundreds years, and here I intend to stay for ever”’ (Chapman 1992: 7).

With the Chinese occupation and exile of its main inhabitant, the Dalai Lama, the Potala has come to be a symbol of old Tibet: while the monumental solidity of the exteriors represents the resistance and persistence of Tibetan culture, the interior symbolises the absence of the Dalai Lama and hence its loss of sacred purpose (Bishop 1997: 67). It is a common observation of many Western travellers that the Potala seems ‘empty, lifeless...Despite the confusion, the plethora of objects, the Potala is a strangely empty place: it has no heart, the life has gone out of it. It is an eerie silent museum’ (Hadfield and Hadfield 1988: 48-9). The Potala has ‘become a place for tourists, a museum, a mausoleum’ (Bass 1993: 106). This emptying of Potala’s interior does not challenge its role as a symbol of resistance to the Chinese occupation. Sorrel Wilby’s comments on Potala reflect the cliché: it rose ‘from the Chinese ghettos like a victorious, battle-scarred star. Shining, literally beaming with Tibetanness. I had made it to Lhasa. Lhasa at last!’ (1988: 16)

5D.i. David-Neel’s ‘Journey to Lhasa’

Alexandra David-Neel was the first Western woman to be granted an audience with the Dalai Lama in Kalimpong.²⁵ She was the first to enter Lhasa when she went with a Sikkimese Lama (Yongden) whom she adopted as her son and brought to live in

²⁵ For a critical take on David-Neel’s travel writing, see Mills 1991.

France. She set off in the winter of 1923 disguised as a Tibetan pilgrim, maps hidden in her boots, revolver in her peasant dress; she outwitted officials and bandits, enduring days without food and nights without shelter, restoring energy with a granule of strychnine. She willed heat into her body by *thumo reskiang*, the mental discipline practised by Tibetan ascetics, and, ‘hypnotised by the will to succeed’, finally reached her destination. Her account of her journey to Lhasa is replete with various themes common to Exotica Tibet. Though it is a travel account, it is also a journey into spiritual realms. As Peter Hopkirk writes in the introduction to her book, ‘her explorations were of the Tibetan mind rather than of the terrain’ (David-Neel 1991: xv).

The book starts with her rationale for taking the adventurous but dangerous trip. The British prohibited her from travelling in the Himalayan region and this increased her determination. Once when she was stopped from proceeding into Tibet,

I took an oath that in spite of all obstacles I would reach Lhasa and show what the will of a woman could achieve! But I did not think only of avenging my own defeats. I wanted the right to exhort others to pull down the antiquated barriers which surround, in the center of Asia ... if ‘heaven is the Lord’s’, the earth is the inheritance of man, and ... consequently any honest traveller has the right to walk as he chooses, all over the globe which is his (xxv).

Her criticisms are also directed against the central Tibetan authority based in Lhasa. It was a period when Tibetans had been successful in pushing out the Chinese army, and controlled large parts of the ethnically Tibetan area. According to her, the Tibetans lost much in parting with China for their ‘sham independence profits only a clique of court officials. Most of those who rebelled against the far-off and relaxed Chinese rule regret it nowadays, when taxes, statute labour, and the arrogant plundering of the national soldiery greatly exceed the extortions of their former masters’ (256).

Her account is filled with stereotypical remarks about the ‘Orientals’ in general and Tibetans in particular. She makes pejorative remarks about Tibetans including her own adopted son, ‘the obstinate fellow’: ‘Yongden thought only of his thirst’ (14).

David-Neel’s exoticism is more about the Tibetan landscape and less about the Tibetan people. While she finds most Tibetans very superstitious, she admires the physical landscape: ‘But is not everything a fairy tale in this extraordinary country, even to the name it gives itself, that of *Khang Yul*, “the land of snows”?’ (277). She

derives spirituality not from Tibetan religion but from the geographical and natural landscape. After living the life of a Tibetan mystic, she felt that natural edifices like mountains and valleys conveyed a mysterious message: 'What I heard was the thousand-year old echo of thoughts which are re-thought over and over again in the East, and which, nowadays, appear to have fixed their stronghold in the majestic heights of Thibet' (24). She considered the fantastic to be an everyday occurrence in Tibet. Mystics and mysticism are ever present in the account. Speaking of the mystics' retreat in parts of Tibet, she writes 'this world of the Thibetan mystics is a mystery in the mystery of Thibet, a strange wonder in a wonderful country' (198).

David-Neel is conscious of her gender and the extra significance it has for her trip. When she finally succeeds in her goal, she writes 'all sights, all things which are Lhasa's own beauty and peculiarity, would have to be seen by the lone woman explorer who had had the nerve to come to them from afar, the first of her sex' (259). She concludes 'the first white woman had entered forbidden Lhasa and shown the way. May others follow and open with loving hearts the gates of the wonderland' (310).

Although David-Neel's journey into the wonderland of Tibet was a spiritual adventure, the dominant feeling one gets is of a travel adventure. In contrast, accounts such as *The Snow Leopard* are primarily about spiritual journey. Physical adventure comes to symbolise spiritual quest.

5D.ii. Matthiessen's search for 'The snow leopard'

The Snow leopard (1995) is about the search in the Himalayas for the elusive eponymous cat. It is also a celebrated account of the bond between human beings and nature. Written out of Peter Matthiessen's interest in Zen, *The Snow Leopard* recounts his trip to the remotest parts of Nepal with the naturalist George Schaller in search of the Himalayan blue sheep and the rarely seen snow leopard. In bittersweet remembrance following the death of his wife, Matthiessen confronts the beauty, mysteries and often-violent world of the Himalayas and his own equally strange and difficult feelings about life and death. Not surprisingly, the one book he carries with him is *The Tibetan book of the dead*.

Matthiessen expresses his anxiety about the loss under Chinese occupation of Tibetan culture from the map of the cultural world. He quotes Lama Angarika Govinda to the effect that Tibetan culture was the last citadel of 'all that present-day humanity is longing for, either because it has been lost or not yet been realized or because it is in danger of disappearing from human sight: the stability of a tradition, which has its roots not only in a historical or cultural past, but within the innermost being of man...' (13-14).

The author exoticises natives throughout the novel. Praising sherpas for their primitivism, he writes, 'the generous and open outlook of the sherpas, a kind of merry defencelessness, is by no means common, even among sophisticated peoples; I have never encountered it before except among the Eskimos' (40). His companion calls sherpas 'childish people' (109). The author is ashamed of himself when he witnesses the 'happy go lucky spirit', the 'acceptance which is not fatalism but a deep trust in life' exhibited by the sherpa companions (149).

Unlike David-Neel, who had the specific goal of reaching Lhasa, Matthiessen has no aim. 'I would like to reach the Crystal Monastery, I would like to see a snow leopard, but if I do not, that is all right, too' (93). When all he gets to see are the marks of the snow leopard, he writes 'I am disappointed, and also, I am not disappointed. That the snow leopard *is*, that it is here, that its frosty eyes watch us from the mountain – that is enough' (221). In response to a question: 'Have you seen the snow leopard?', he replies 'No! Isn't that wonderful?' (225). When asked why he took the journey, he replies: 'I wished to penetrate (*sic*) the secrets of the mountains in search of something still unknown that, like the yeti, might well be missed for the very fact of searching' (121-2).

The Snow leopard in its spiritual quest also becomes a means through which the Western Self is critiqued. The author writes 'my head has cleared in these weeks free of intrusions – mail, telephones, people and their needs – and I respond to things spontaneously, without defensive or self-conscious screens' (112). The account ends with despair as 'I am still beset with the same old lusts and ego and emotions...I look forward to nothing' (272). The elusive snow leopard stands here for the mystical elusiveness of Tibetan culture, for the elusiveness of renouncing Western desires.

5E. Land of mysticism and fantasy

‘We Tibetans believe that everyone before the Fall of Man had the ability to travel in astral, see by clairvoyance, telepathize and levitate. Our version of that Fall is that Man abused the occult powers and used them for self-interest instead of for the development of mankind as a whole’ (Rampa 143).

An integral theme of Exotica Tibet has been the imagination of Tibet as a land of mysticism and fantasy where most events are romantic, extraordinary and absolutely different from anything in the West. In fact, often I find in the bookshops that the books on Tibet are mostly classified as part of spiritualism, occult or mysticism even when they have little to do with any of these topics. Tibet is seen as a ‘bewitching region’ where mysticism is a part of daily experience and the fantastic is an everyday occurrence. It is considered ‘a magical, delicate country’ (Seymour in Chang-ching and Seymour 1998: xi). Contrasting this image with the West’s self-portrait, Jamyang Norbu writes, ‘Tibet is seen as the “antithesis” of the West not so much in the sense of a “darker” civilization, but rather in the matter of corporeality. The West, whatever its failings, is real; Tibet, however wonderful, is a dream; whether of a long-lost golden age or millenarian fantasy, it is still merely a dream’ (2001: 375). This representation (as imaginative practice) is common in ‘ethnographic’ as well as ‘fantasy’ literature.

In her account of life in the border region of Tibet in *With mystics and magicians in Tibet* (1936/1931), David-Neel writes ‘though, wonderful as this entrance house of Tibet proved to be, I know that I am far from having obtained a glimpse of all the strange mystic doctrines and practices which are hidden from the profane in the hermitages of the “Land of Snow”’ (1936: 88). While praising the mysticism of spiritual adepts, she is critical of what she calls the ‘repugnant mysticism’ of the ‘superstitious’ masses that concerns itself with ghosts and demons. She mentions having met three *lung-gom-pas* runners – those who take extraordinarily long tramps with amazing rapidity by combining mental concentration with breathing gymnastics. She also refers to her own ability to practice the art of warming oneself without fire up in the snows and the capacity to send messages ‘on the wind’ (telepathy) that was a privilege of a small minority of adepts (210-20).

Mysticism is not a dominant theme only in ethnographic/autobiographical works such as David-Neel’s. A very prominent mixture of fantasy and mysticism is found in

fictional/fantasy literature. The most (in)famous example is the trilogy written by Lobsang Rampa, who, although an ordinary Englishman, claimed the trilogy to be the autobiography of a Tibetan lama. His works reflect the centrality of stereotyping, essentialism, exoticism, idealisation, affirmation, gerontification, naturalisation and criticism of the West as some of the dominant tropes in Western representations of Tibet.

5E.i. 'The third eye' of Rampa the mystifier

Tuesday Lobsang Rampa (alias Cyril Hoskin) was a mystifier, in two senses of the modern meaning of the term. First, he mystified Tibet, embellishing its various realities with his own mystical fancies, and second, he mystified his readers, playing on the credulity of the reading public (Lopez 1998: 86). Initially he did not disclose his identity and later, when detective investigation revealed that he was an English plumber who had never been to Tibet, he claimed to have been possessed by a Tibetan lama and over the course of seven years to have become a Tibetan, not just in his dress but in his molecules. The trilogy consists of *The third eye: the autobiography of a Tibetan lama* (1956), *Doctor from Lhasa* (1959), and *The Rampa story* (1960). The most prominent of these is *The third eye*, published in 1956 by Secker and Warburg despite opposition from experts on Tibet. The publishers defend their decision by asserting in the preface that it is

in its essence an authentic account of the upbringing and training of a Tibetan boy in his family and in a lamasery. Anyone who differs from us will, we believe, at least agree that the author is endowed to an exceptional degree with narrative skills and the power to evoke scenes and characters of absorbing and unique interest (Rampa 1956: 6).

It became an immediate best seller. Though the community of European experts on Tibet was outraged, most reviews were positive.²⁶ Despite the disclosure of his identity as an unemployed plumber in February 1958, the book continued to sell.

Rampa opens the book with statements (that are unlikely to come from a Tibetan): 'I am a Tibetan. One of the few who have reached this strange Western world' (Rampa 1956: 9). This autobiography of a young Tibetan lama, his life in Tibet, his training as

²⁶ Though most experts are scathing in their criticism of the fraudulent Rampa, Donald Lopez Jr. praises his books as having 'brought the plight of Tibet to an otherwise indifferent audience of hundreds of thousands of Westerners, who would remain unconcerned were it not for the trappings of astral travel, spiritualism, and the hope of human evolution to a new age' (Lopez 1998: 107).

priest-surgeon, his spiritual and fantastic adventures, and finally his departure from Tibet, is replete with stereotypes and clichés about Tibet that were prevalent in the mid twentieth century.

Rampa defends Tibetan society's exclusiveness and resistance to progress. He writes, 'Tibet was a theocratic country. We had no desire for the "progress" of the outside world. We only wanted to be able to meditate and to overcome the limitations of the flesh' (14). Contrary to the view that Tibet was a feudal society, he writes that it was the character of the person and not the rank of the birth that was the basis of a meritocratic system. After all 'the Law is hard on the rich to teach them understanding and equity. The Law is gentle with the poor to show them compassion' (20). Even animals are treated with dignity: 'Tibetan animals are not pets, nor are they slaves, they are beings with a useful purpose to serve, beings with rights just as human beings have rights' (33).

Tibet is not only rich in mysticism, but also rich in material wealth. Rampa invokes the gold that was a crucial part of the imagination of Tibet in the early twentieth century.²⁷ 'There are hundreds of tons of gold in Tibet, we regard it as sacred metal...Tibet could be one of the greatest storehouses of the world if mankind would work together in peace instead of so much useless striving for power' (206). In the Chang Tang highlands, lumps of gold 'could be picked up as easily as could the pebbles' (221).

The fantastic never leaves the description. After some time in the medical-school cum monastery, Rampa's third eye is opened through surgery. He can ascertain people's health and moods from their emanation (101-2). He is also given a crystal used as an instrument to penetrate the subconscious. Later, Rampa sees records of 'the Chariots of the Gods' (Unidentified Flying Objects?) and argues that some lamas had established telepathic communication with these 'aliens' (140). He mentions that

²⁷ Fascination with gold has been a part of Western imagination of Tibet since ancient times when the Greeks wrote of gold-digging ants. In the early twentieth century, the British Foreign Office wrote:

Even though gold is not produced much in early 20th century, it has little bearing over future possibilities. Holdich sums up sentiment: 'Tibet is not only rich [in gold] in the ordinary acceptance of the term; she must be enormously rich – possibly richer than any country in the world. For thousands of years gold has been washed out of her

levitation is possible but astral travelling is easier and surer. He describes his trip to a secret volcanic territory in the north with tropical vegetation where he sees a few yetis.

(If) Western Man had his way, our poor old yetis would be captured, dissected, and preserved in spirit ... I am prepared, when the Communists are chased out of Tibet, to accompany an expedition of sceptics and *show* them the yetis in the Highlands. They can use oxygen and bearers, I will use my old monk's robe. Cameras will prove the truth. We had no photographic equipment in Tibet in those days (220).

The audience (the West) is never absent from the narrative. The 'autobiography' indulges in the representational strategy of self-criticism when Tibet is compared favourably to the West. The Dalai Lama warns Rampa that, while one could discuss the 'Greater Realities' in Tibet and China, in the West one had to be extra careful because Westerners 'worship commerce and gold' – 'they ask for "proof" while uncaring that their negative attitude of suspicion kills any chance of their obtaining that proof' (112).

Yeti, time travel, hypnotism, telepathy, levitation, astral-travel, clairvoyance, invisibility – Tibet is a land of possibilities! It combines mysticism and fantasy, being both a lost horizon and a future utopia.

5F. Tibet as Shangri-la

'I really can't see why you should jump at everything just because you're in Tibet' (Mallinson's statement to Conway, Hilton 1933: 259)

Integral to the Western imagination of Tibet, beginning in the late nineteenth century with theosophists and taken to its extreme in James Hilton's *Lost horizon*, has been a notion of utopia – Tibet as a sanctuary from the materialism and violence of modern times, a sanctuary for those disaffected with modernity and seeking peace and wisdom. Matthias Hermanns, an ethnologist in Amdo during the 1930s and 1940s, made use of this concept, which soon gained wider currency: 'Tibet as a repository of archaic forms of biological and—more important—social life. Tibet as a sanctuary' (Kvaerne 2001: 54). This sanctuary is placeless (lacking definitive physical location) and yet placed (located) in Tibet.

surface soil by the very crudest of all processes...From every river which has its source in the Tibetan plateau, gold is washed (1920: 61).

The myth of Shangri-la²⁸ -- that there exists a secret utopian place somewhere in Tibet – has been integral to Western representations of Tibet throughout the twentieth century. Describing the imagination of Tibet as a Shangri-la as ‘Rampaism’, Agehananda Bharati summarises this attitude:

there is, somewhere hidden in the Himalayas (invariably mis-stressed on the penultimate ‘a’), a powerful, mystical, initiate brotherhood of lamas or similar guru adepts, who not only know all the mysteries of the world and the superworld, who not only incorporate and transcend the teachings of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, but who also master all the occult arts — they fly through the air at enormous speeds, they run 400 miles at a stretch without break, they appear here and there, and they are arch-and-core advisors to the wise and the great who hide these ultimate links to supreme wisdom and control (1974: 1)

Reflecting his own vision of Shangri-la, Amaury De Riencourt writes:

Locked up in countless secret libraries in some out of the way lamaseries, there are a great many treatises of which foreigners have never heard, worn out by centuries and by thousands of studious lamas who try hard to get easy access to the mysterious beyond...[these are] Tibetan laboratories where occult forces are tested and manipulated (1950: 264).

The origin of the Shangri-la myth can be traced to two different sources – the indigenous Tibetan mythology of a hidden kingdom of *Shambhala* and the theosophist construction of ‘Mahatmas’ living in the Himalayan region of Tibet. According to the theosophists, they were heirs to ancient divine wisdom, which – long ago lost to ordinary people – had secretly been preserved by a benevolent brotherhood residing in Tibet.²⁹

Central to the ‘Shangri-la myth’ is the secret valley hidden somewhere in the vast region of Tibet. This utopia is neither completely placeless nor completely moored in physical space. ‘Shangri-La marks the final movement of Tibet from a geographically grounded sacred place to a placeless utopia’ (Bishop 1989: ix). It is a repository – a repository of mental peace, spiritual wisdom, ‘high’ culture, and physical wealth. It is

²⁸ Shangri-la is the mythical name given by Hilton in *Lost horizon* to the lamasery in a secret valley somewhere in the Himalayan region which combines Western physical comfort and Western classical cultural relics with Eastern wisdom.

²⁹ Although Madame Helena Blavatsky’s books like *Isis Unveiled* had little mention of Tibet, her lodge in New York was fondly referred to by her followers as ‘the Lamasery’, a clear attempt to link Theosophy with Tibetan mysticism (Korom 2001: 171). Thus, ‘Tibet and Tibetans were, in the Theosophical teaching, purely imaginary objects’ (Penderson 2001: 157). In a similar vein, the British New Age proponent Alice Bailey in 1934 began to write down messages she received telepathically from a spirit known simply as ‘the Tibetan’. The Tibetan’s first communiqué revealed to Bailey ‘a millenarian vision of the coming of the new age during the cosmic transition from Pisces to Aquarius, at which time the problems of mankind would be collaboratively solved by a group of highly evolved spirits and their earthly

a repository of desires – Western desires which leave little room for cultural and historical specificity of Tibet. Western travellers' search for the 'real Tibet' often takes them beyond actual Tibetans:

the real Tibet I was searching for was not out in the open. It was not in the magnificent temples and palaces, in the colorful bazaars, in the happy and carefree life of its farmers or in the entrancing charm of Lhasa's social life. Real Tibet transcends politics and economics; it is invisible, beyond sense-perception, beyond intellect. It is the mysterious land of the psyche, of what lies beyond death, a universe to which some Tibetans have the key and which their subtle soul seems to have explored as thoroughly as Western scientists have explored our physical universe (Riencourt 1950: 262).

Connected to the myth of Shangri-la is a fear of loss – either a loss that is inevitable because Tibetan civilisation is endangered by modernisation or communism or a loss that has already occurred. The latter is a nostalgia for a Tibet that exists mainly in the Western imagination – a pristine, virgin territory giving way to forces of progress; a sacred place trampled by the onslaught of modern forces, first the British and then the Chinese. In the twentieth century, there is a strong sense of 'time running out' in Western accounts of Tibet. 'Unlike the previous Tibets, which had a timeless permanence about them, in the twentieth century an all-pervading sense of loss was the leitmotiv of Western imagining. While the *fin-de-siecle* Tibet was *edged* with impermanence, now such fears were *central*' (Bishop 1989: 202; emphases in original). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, this fear has been realised. Tibet is seen as being condemned to almost certain death. 'The final fate of Tibet hangs in the balance of choice between those who favour political pragmatism and those who favour spiritual values. The experience of history, if it is to be taken as a guide, is that Tibet is condemned to certain death. Unless, of course, there is that last-minute miracle' (Patterson 1990: 226). Here we see obituaries already being written even before the death. 'Time is running out for Tibet – a nation that has refused to hold the world to ransom by hijacking planes, kidnapping, perpetrating senseless violence on innocent victims – a nation that for 1-2000 years has lived in peace and wants no more than to be free and to continue to live in peace' (Kewley 1990: 381-2).

5F.i. The 'Lost horizon'/the last horizon

agents' (Korom 2001: 169). Out of her 24 books, Bailey claimed that 19 were written by her 'Tibetan Master', DK (Djwhal Khul).

Hilton's *Lost horizon*, which introduced the term 'Shangri-la', was made into a film by Frank Capra in 1937, and appeared as the world's first paperback soon after. 'Shangri' has no meaning in Tibetan; 'la' means 'mountain pass'. The name is apparently a garbling of 'Shambhala', a mythical Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas according to Tibetan legends (see Bernbaum 2001; LePage 1996; Trungpa). Partly due to Hilton's novel, but mostly due to the uncertainties of the late 1930s, Shangri-la quickly came into common usage as a place where all that is good and true is preserved. After the American planes bombed Japan in the 1942 'Doolittle' Raid – immortalised in the film *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* – news reporters asked President Roosevelt where the planes had taken off from. He replied, 'Shangri-La'. Roosevelt later authorised that the presidential retreat in Maryland be named Shangri-la. On the President's first official visit, July 5, 1942, he wrote in his 'log book': '*U.S.S. Shangri La -- Launched at Catoctin, July 5, 1942*' (Shangri-La n.d.). This retreat is now named Camp David, after President Eisenhower's grandson. Today Shangri-la is the name of a chain of resort hotels.³⁰

At the end of the twentieth century, Shangri-la has come to be synonymous with Tibet, a Tibet that has been lost, a Tibet that may be lost, or a Tibet that still may have hope. Shangri-la's geography is one of hope and despair: a search for both personal experience and salvation for an entire civilisation (see Bishop 1989: 210-11). The myth is a resolution of the dreams of frustrated Western explorers and adventurers because instead of being forbidden, instead of turning Westerners back, it wanted the best of them.

Lost horizon offers Occidentals the perfect fantasy blend of East and West: the spiritual ecumenism of Madame Blavatsky and Alexandra David-Neel raised to the nth power; a potpourri of Buddhism merged with Christianity, the crepitations of traditional Tibetan horns leavened with harpsichord music by Rameau, a melange of Buddhist sutras in Tibetan and 'the world's best literature' in every European language- in short, a Buddhist Shambhala with a Western humanistic sensibility set in a magic valley ruled by a benevolent Catholic missionary gone native who now wishes to pass his benign monastic mantle on to an erudite ex-Oxford sage (Schell 2000: 244-5).

The novel is not a literary masterpiece, but Hilton succeeds in catching the mood of the times, reflecting the fear of his generation, and offering an escape from the harsh realities of the Western world (Allen 1999: 39). The main character is a British Indian

³⁰ Shangri-La hotels advertise that although mythical in origin, their name epitomises 'the serenity and highly personalised service' for which it is renowned. (Shangri-La Media Centre

official, Robert Conway, who, along with the younger official, Charles Mallinson, a missionary, Miss Roberta Brinklow, and an American businessman, Henry Barnard, is hijacked and taken to an unknown mountainous region somewhere in Tibet. They are transported to a hidden valley of the blue moon. The valley has a lamasery named Shangri-la that combines the best of Western technology with Eastern luxury. The head priest, who is several hundred years old, wants Conway to take over his position. Conway is told that the valley affords a very long life to selected people and the main purpose of the establishment is to act as a sanctuary when the outside world is in chaos. Conway falls in love with a quiet Chinese lady, Lo-Tsen, without knowing that she and Mallinson were becoming lovers. While Barnard and Miss Brinklow agree to stay in the valley (the former to help in gold mining and the latter to convert Tibetans into Christianity), the impatient Mallinson persuades Conway to accompany him and Lo-Tsen to safety outside the valley. Conway departs in despair, all his hope lost as he realises that he is a wanderer between two worlds and must forever wander: 'he was doomed, like millions, to flee from wisdom and be a hero' (Hilton 1933: 264).

Though Hilton's Shangri-la has come to be associated with Tibet, in the book itself, apart from its probable geographical location, there was hardly anything Tibetan about the place. According to Conway, the atmosphere was Chinese, rather than specifically Tibetan (1967: 52). Tibetans were the inhabitants of the lower valley who sang in 'lilting barbaric tunes' (1967: 46), worked in the fields, provided entertainment, and lived a subaltern life. The inhabitants of the valley were a blend of Chinese and Tibetan and were cleaner and handsomer than the average of either race (1933: 129). The high lama is a Luxembourger and most inhabitants of the lamasery are Europeans. In order to keep the lamasery populated, outsiders were acquired. Father Perrault, the high lama, explains that they once had a Japanese who was not a fine acquisition; 'Tibetans are much less sensitive than outside races and die sooner, even though they are charming'; Chinese are slightly better; the 'best subjects, undoubtedly, are the Nordic and Latin races of Europe' (1967: 110).

Hilton's Shangri-la had central heating and combined the mechanics of Western hygiene with much else that was 'Eastern' and 'traditional'. For instance, after his arrival Conway enjoyed a bath in a porcelain tub from Ohio, while a native attended to

2001).

him in a Chinese fashion (1967: 51). Shangri-la was always tranquil, yet always a hive of ‘unpursuing occupations’; ‘the lamas lived as if indeed they had time on their hands, but time that was scarcely a featherweight’ (1967: 139). Inhabitants of the lamasery indulged in various intellectual pursuits – writing manuscripts, doing pure mathematics, coordinating Gibbon and Spengler into a vast thesis on the history of European civilisation, formulating new theories about *Wuthering heights*, and so on. This was in line with the principal rationale for the existence of Shangri-la: to act as a sanctuary. The purpose of Shangri-la was to be a ‘war refuge’ for preserving the best of modern civilisations (1933: 191-2).

Thus, *Lost horizon* creates a utopia placed somewhere in Tibet. The (dis)placing of Shangri-la to Tibet allows Westerners to transfer their desire for utopia onto Tibet. This utopia, though it may have scavenged upon the indigenous Tibetan conception of Shambhala, is exclusively a Western construct. This is not surprising as in the Western imagination, Tibet’s role has been salvific, one of a ‘service society’ both critiquing and assuaging the West’s self-conception.

5G. The West’s playground

‘Tibet’s importance for our time, and for the future survival of Earth itself, is more critical than ever. Being our most vibrant link to the ancient wisdom traditions, Tibet, and the sanity she represents, must not be allowed to disappear’ (Richard Gere in Rhie and Thurman 1991: 8).

Exotica Tibet is a product of the Western imagination. It therefore comes as no surprise to see Tibet operating as a physical and imaginative playground for Westerners and their desires. For instance, the media coverage of Tibetan uprisings in Lhasa during the 1980s and 1990s focused disproportionately on the minimal mishaps and daring of Westerners. Representational strategies of self-affirmation and self-criticism are as integral to the Western imagination of Tibet today as they were in the

past.³¹ Tibetans are treated as objects in stories of heroic achievement by outsiders, or as victims of abuse who are incapable of agency.³²

Tibet still

operates as a constituent of a romanticism in which the Orient is not debased but exalted as a surrogate self endowed with all that the West wants. It is Tibet that will regenerate the West by showing us, prophetically, what we can be by showing us what it had been. It is Tibet that can save the world, cynical and materialist, from itself. Tibet is seen as a cure for an ever-dissolving Western civilization, restoring its spirit. An internal absence is thus perceived as existing outside, and it is outside, let it be found in the most remote, the most inaccessible, the most mysterious part of the world (Lopez 1998: 202-3).

Tibet is seen as offering essential spiritual services to humanity. Its survival is thus considered more important than that of many other postcolonial national groups.³³ This reflects the stranglehold of the myth of Shangri-la. This Shangri-la fantasy has primarily to do with the psychological needs of certain people in the West and Tibet and its culture serves as a backdrop to the predominantly white protagonists in films and books (Norbu 2001: 374).

The fantasy about Tibet often belongs to the world of *National Geographic* and global adventure tourism, and not necessarily to 'Shangri-la' or spiritual wisdom.³⁴ 'Elusive

³¹ Thurman writes with approval that Tibetan society 'is one of the world's most relaxed and flexible societies about social hierarchy, sexuality, marriage arrangements' (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 9). It is ironic to watch how Western evaluation of the same characteristic of Tibetan society has changed so drastically over last century – this flexibility was seen as morally corrupt by Victorian and Edwardian British.

³² Exasperated with this scenario, Tibetan intellectual Jamyang Norbu writes: 'However hopeless their cause ... Tibetans are better off living their own reality than being typecast in ethereal roles in the fantasies of the West' (2001: 378).

³³ Richard Gere uses the analogy of David and Goliath to offer hope to the Tibetans and reminds them, 'You must maintain that sense of uniqueness and that genuine cultural commitment to nonviolence. If you pick up arms and become like the Palestinians, you'll lose your special status' (quoted in Schell 2000: 56).

³⁴ The role of Tibet as a mere playground for Westerners' adventure is more clearly visible in Davidson's *The rose of Tibet* (1995/1962). It is a fictional story about Charles Houston, an Englishman, who went inside Tibet, encountered the 'she-devil', the abbess of Yamdring monastery, had sexual escapades with her but failed to 'possess' her, tried to rescue her (and some emeralds) from the Chinese, and ended up with half a share in the emerald. It is a typical adventure story with little evidence of Tibet's association with spiritualism. Its most defining feature is abundance of sexual motifs. Here we come across priestesses who are not allowed to have sex, but they still do it 'like rattlesnakes', often with outsiders as there are only a hundred monks to 'take care' of them (1995: 336). We encounter the she-devil who was 'not old, and she was not cold; and she was far from being a virgin' (399); instead, she was 'delicious and delectable and always unknowable' (407). And she possessed 'green tears' – emeralds – half of which she later gives to Houston as a sign of her love. Houston not only makes love to her, but also insists on her being monogamous. He fails in this as she indulges in 'particularly, vilely horrible' custom of having sex with the main abbot. On his doubts that the she-devil

glimpses and serendipitous associations have been integral to Western fantasies about Tibet, positioned, as it has been, just beyond the very edge of imperial control for much of the past two hundred years' (Bishop 2001: 203). Tibet provides a set for the 'drama of white people' (Norbu 1998: 20). The role of Tibet as transformative as well as a colourful set is clear in *Seven years in Tibet* – both the book and the Hollywood movie.

5G.i. Harrer's 'Seven years in Tibet'

Seven years in Tibet (1956) is an account of an Austrian, Heinrich Harrer, in Tibet. With the outbreak of the Second World War, the British in India interned him. After some unsuccessful attempts, he escaped in 1944 and, along with Peter Aufschnaiter, crossed the Himalayas into Tibet. After dodging officials, they managed to reach Lhasa in early 1946. Instead of being turned back, they were accepted by the authorities in Lhasa. Harrer's account of his stay in Tibet covers a crucial time in Tibetan history, its last years as an independent state. He also became an official paid by the Tibetans, and tutored the young Dalai Lama before he was forced to leave Lhasa in 1951 when the Chinese took control.

It is interesting to note that Harrer and his companion set out for Lhasa just after the war was over. So, it was not the escape from the British but the 'lure of the Forbidden City' that encouraged them (86-7). In the tradition of previous travellers to Lhasa, he describes his first site of the golden roofs of Potala: 'this moment compensated us for much. We felt inclined to go down on our knees like the pilgrims and touch the ground with our forehead' (113).

Though the trope of idealisation and self-criticism is dominant, Harrer's attitude is full of ambiguity. He writes of his infuriation with the 'fatalistic resignation' (145) with which Tibetans lent themselves to backbreaking toil (they did not use the wheel) and

should be having sex with an old man, he is told that 'our women have rather better constitutions than most'. Houston was fine as long as the she-devil was with him. Now,

[h]e didn't know this country or these people, and he didn't think he ever would...He had been infatuated with her and with an image he had constructed of her: of a pale china rose, nurtured in shade, something immensely precious and immensely fragile. But he saw her now as an object lovely but diseased, a rank thing growing unhealthily on top of a dunghill. He didn't want the rank thing or the dunghill. He wanted very much to get away from both (441).

is scathing of the Tibetan government's attitude towards modern medicine, hygiene and sanitation. He writes disparagingly of the prevalence of venereal disease and homosexuality (186). Yet, he 'did not miss the appliances of Western civilization. Europe with its life of turmoil seemed far away' (156). While pondering if progress in the form of a motor road to India would be good or not, he thinks 'One should not force a people to introduce inventions which are *far ahead of their stage of evolution*...Tibetan culture and way of life more than compensates for the advantages of modern techniques' (185; emphasis added). The admirable aspect of Tibetan culture, for Harrer, included the 'perfect courtesy of the people' and 'cultivated and elegant' upper class women.

In its film version, *Seven years in Tibet* (1997) loses almost all its ambiguity. It becomes a story of Harrer, a self-centred and individualistic Westerner, who gets transformed in Tibet. He, 'a flawed European, consumed by selfishness and ambition, would be saved by the innocence and ancient wisdom of Tibet' (Buruma 2001). Superlatives become abundant in describing Tibet – 'roof of the world', 'highest country on earth', 'most isolated', 'medieval stone fortress towering in the centre of Asia', and so on. In *Seven Years in Tibet* the people of Lhasa 'casually offer pearls of wisdom about the harmony of Tibet in comparison to the West' (Hansen 2001: 105): one Tibetan says 'We admire a man who abandons his ego, unlike you, who admire those who reach the top'.

5H. China and Exotica Tibet

'[Lhasa was not] forbidden like the forbidden city of China, Beijing, which had a violence attached to it ... But in Tibet you had a sense of something peaceful and something magical and spiritual' (Martin Scorsese, Frontline 1998a).

China has always loomed large in the Western imagination of Tibet. During the eighteenth century, one of Bogle's aims while travelling to Tibet was to 'investigate the relations between Tibet and China with an eye to the possibility of the influence of the former country being used to bring about an improvement in English trade and diplomacy with the latter country' (Lamb 1960: 9). Either China is compared favourably, as we saw in our previous discussion of David-Neel, or it is considered a spiritual vacuum. Western stereotypes of China and Tibet are often connected. A

positive evaluation of Tibetans is accompanied by a negative attitude toward the Chinese, and vice versa. Taylor writes, 'Tibetans are among the easiest people to get along with in Asia. The smiles are infectious and it is rare for major cultural differences to get in the way of communication', though many Tibetans in business and administration have picked up from the Chinese habits of 'rudeness, overcharging and obstructionism' (1986: 40).

The exoticised and positive imagery of Tibet during the twentieth century stands in contrast to the Chinese representations of Tibet. Ironically, the Chinese representation of Old Tibet as 'feudal hell' is similar to early British writings. Li Tieh-Tseng writes that the Tibetans lack a sense of history as understood by other peoples, and hence the only reliable source of history of Sino-Tibetan relations is Chinese (1954). Chinese communist rhetoric includes an image of Tibetan backwardness and a juxtaposition of the 'superior' Han to the 'backward' Tibetan. Minority policy in China is founded on the idea of stages of social forms, where the minority nationalities (*minzu shaoshu*) represent less advanced stages in an evolutionary system (Kolas 1998: 70). The Han Chinese working in Tibet do not see themselves as an occupying force, but as idealistic missionaries of progress, as performing a service.

The attitude towards Tibetans is linked to minority discourse prevalent in China. The common perception among the Han Chinese is that minorities are 'stupid, lazy, dirty, and backward'. Studies like that of Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong (2000) have shown that while most minorities are looked at as positive primitives, Tibetans are considered barbarians. In all areas examined by the survey – intelligence level, cultural attainments, interest in education, political capabilities, or appearance – Tibetans rank the worst (*Ibid.*). Tibetans, like other minorities are not only degraded, but also exoticised and eroticised. In the 1990s young, urban Chinese often looked toward Tibetan culture for expression. Artists, for instance, paint and sculpt the 'ethereal' Tibetans, as Tibetans are seen as more spiritual than the materialistic Chinese (Lee 1996: 202). Chinese writer Ma Lihua authors sentimental Chinese prose about the simple Tibetans and their quaint ways (Lafitte 2001).

5I. Conclusion

This brief sketch of the contours of the Western imagination of Tibet during the twentieth century shows a rich imaginal diversity. The emphasis in this chapter, as in this section as a whole, has been on the poetics of Western representations of Tibet – *how* Tibet has been represented in the West. Now, we need to move on to analyse *what effect* these representations have on those represented, the Tibetans. The next chapter is about the role of ‘symbolic geography’ in Tibetan cultural identity discourse in the diaspora. It looks at the issues of representation and identity and forms a bridge between my ongoing discussion of poetics of Exotica Tibet with chapter 7 that deals explicitly with politics of Exotica Tibet. My analysis will consider the impact of representational practices on identity discourses. The argument is that the connotation of ‘Tibetan’ and ‘Tibetanness’ is shaped by Western representations both culturally and politically.

Chapter 6: The politics of Exotica Tibet: Tibetan (trans-) national identity¹

'The epistemological model that offers us a pregiven subject or agent is one that refuses to acknowledge that *agency is always and only a political prerogative*' (Butler 1992: 13, emphasis in original).

Until the last decades of the twentieth century, the preoccupation with religion and history contributed to a relative neglect of the issues of contemporary Tibetan identity within social and political studies. The prevalence of missionary, diplomatic, journalistic, and traveller's views² within Western popular culture had an impact on the academic study of Tibet: the essentially political question of what it means to be a Tibetan was ignored. The signifier 'Tibetan' is usually seen in terms of an ontological essentialism.³ This often leads to a papering over of the socially constructed and politically contested nature of Tibetan cultural and political identity, or 'Tibetanness' as it may conveniently be called.⁴ The next two chapters examine the articulations of Tibetanness in political and cultural spheres, argue for new ways of theorising these identities, and interrogate the constitutive role played by Western representations in these identity discourses.

While acknowledging that the distinction between the cultural and the political may be construed as de-politicising culture and un-culturing politics, I look at cultural and political identities separately for analytical purposes. At the same time, the close inter-linkages between the two will be highlighted. The study of cultural identity must be a concern of IR and not relegated to anthropology or cultural studies for two at least reasons. First, the distinction between cultural and political identity is blurred and at

¹ A version of this chapter has been published in *Contemporary South Asia* (Anand 2000). I thank Carfax Publishing (<http://www.tandf.co.uk>) for giving me the permission to use it.

² This borrows from Tsering Shakya's discussion of five major views held within Tibetan studies—the four mentioned here along with a social scientific approach. See Shakya 1996: 1-14.

³ This approach is exemplified in Robert Ekvall's (1960) pioneering work in which he identified five common cultural traits through which Tibetans define themselves: religion, folkways, language, race (human lineage), and land.

⁴ There are exceptions. Margaret Nowak (1984) points out that innovative ideological strategies are deployed by Tibetan refugee youth while expressing their identity. P. Christiaan Klieger, in an analysis of past as well as present Tibetan history, argues that the 'patron/client dyad is a warp and weft upon which ideas of Tibetan identity are woven' (1994: 22).

best problematic. Second, for Tibetans living under occupation and in displacement, every expression of a distinct culture is a political act.

For the purpose of studying the cultural and political facets of Tibetanness, I shall experiment with two approaches. In this chapter, I will bring out the various dynamics, including interaction with the West, that constitute Tibetanness as a national identity. In the next chapter, I will examine the cultural expressions of diasporic Tibetans, highlight the role of Exotica Tibet, and offer a new and innovative way of theorising Tibetanness with an emphasis on postcolonial symbolic geography and cultural identity discourses.

Identity is not an essence, but a performance, an articulation, a discourse. Tibetanness is as much a process as it is a product – it is a productive process. The performance of Tibetan identity does not take place in a vacuum, but in a power-laden international political and cultural context. This international context, in turn, is marked by asymmetries of structural and representational power in which the West remains dominant. Tibetanness has to be articulated within this asymmetrical context and hence Western representational practices play a crucial role. This role is not merely an embellishment; rather it is constitutive. At the same time, however, instead of looking at Tibetanness as merely a product of Western representations (Exotica Tibet) and Tibetans thus as ‘prisoners of Shangri-la’, we ought to acknowledge Tibetan collective agency. This agency is not in opposition to, and autonomous from, representational discourses, but very much a part of them. At the same time, agency is not exhausted by any one particular representational discourse, but is produced out of creative negotiations with various discourses and interstitial spaces shared by them.

There are creative tensions both within Tibetan identity articulations and between these and Exotica Tibet. How has Exotica Tibet affected Tibetanness? What is the politics of Western representations of Tibet in terms of its impact on Tibetan cultural and political identity? I will raise these questions and attempt to provide provisional answers to them in chapters 6 and 7. While the emphasis will be on the various facets of contemporary identity articulations, the poetics of representation – Exotica Tibet as outlined in the previous chapter – will always be present, sometimes lurking in the background, sometimes coming to the forefront. Exotica Tibet is not confined to the cultural sphere. It influences and is in turn influenced by wider local and global

political processes. For instance, the accounts of British Indian officials like Charles Bell and Hugh Richardson show that their 'more prosaic view did not destroy this exotic representation but tacitly encouraged it' (McKay 1997: 207). They too used metaphors of remote space, isolation and timelessness to maintain the implicit sense that Tibet was exotic. In a similar vein, CIA operations during the 1960s and 1970s were also influenced by romanticism, with Tibet designated a 'final retreat (Shangri-la) to which peace-loving people could flee when atomic war breaks, for Tibet is too remote to be of significance in any war' (quoted in Knaus 1999: 26). Prevalent attitudes toward Tibet often reflected contemporary political preoccupations. During the Younghusband invasion most British writings depicted a despicable state of affairs within Tibet. With the American rapprochement with China in the 1970s, little was heard about the destruction of traditional life within Tibet, which peaked during the Cultural Revolution. But a lot of attention was paid to the Tibet question when other communist regimes fell in Eastern Europe and the discourse of human rights emerged on the international plane once again. This linkage of the Tibet question with the West's political interests may be unsurprising, but if we are to address the Tibet question effectively, we need to move beyond conventional international politics with its emphasis on *realpolitik* and narrowly defined national interest. Dominant traditions of realism offer little space for marginalised communities such as the Tibetans.

Two qualifying and clarifying points need to be made before I move on. First, I do not intend to cover all aspects of Tibetanness as articulated by Tibetans everywhere. In fact, my focus is on identity discourses circulating mainly within the Tibetan diaspora. These comprise a very small percentage of the total Tibetan population as most Tibetans still live inside Tibet. The rationale for choosing to study the diaspora is primarily practical: there are limitations on researching in Tibet and due to Chinese control, we have severely limited access to developments within Tibet. Within the diaspora, there is a deliberate focus on the elite discourses as it is largely the elite that shapes how Tibetanness is articulated both within Tibetan communities and for the outside world. This is symptomatic of most 'national' groups, but the predominance of the figure of the Dalai Lama makes it even more so in the Tibetan case. This does not mean that popular articulations are mere copies of the elite discourses, or that the Tibetans living within Tibet imitate discourses prevalent in the diaspora. As I argue, while Tibetanness is a project of creating sameness, it is in fact difference, dynamism and disjuncture that characterise it most.

Second, a clarification with regard to semantics is necessary. Why use the term ‘diaspora’⁵ when the terms ‘exile’ or ‘refugee’ have wider currency amongst Tibetans and analysts? Within the international legal regime, most of the Tibetans living in South Asia and Western countries are refugees, and Tibetans often perceive themselves to be political refugees. Within the Tibetan governmental and intellectual community, exile is a more favoured term. While these terms continue to be popular, Tibetanists as well as the Tibetan elite themselves are increasingly adopting ‘diaspora’ to make sense of Tibetan identity. The term ‘diaspora’ indicates the adoption of new ways of approaching and understanding questions of identity politics. Diasporic subjects are seen not as some anomaly to the norm, but as distinct versions of a modern, transnational, intercultural experience.

The diaspora experience ... is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Hall 1990: 235).

The adoption of the term also reflects the keenness of the Tibetan intellectuals to appropriate any vocabulary that provides them an opportunity to express their identity to the external world. It enables us to theorise Tibetan diasporic identity in terms of contradictions and possibilities, a task that is undertaken in this chapter. These contradictions not only constrain and contain the possibilities for self-expression that are available, but, more importantly, are productive of the very identities in question. This approach also challenges the ‘victimisation paradigm’⁶ so familiar in analyses of Tibetan identity.

6A. The political discourse of Tibetanness

Since 1959 the Chinese, the Tibetan elite in exile, and their Western supporters and detractors, have competed to legitimise their own representations of Tibetan history and current events. This ‘confrontation of “representations”’ (Goldstein 1997: 56) is

⁵ John Armstrong defined a diaspora as ‘any ethnic collectivity which lacks a territorial base within a given polity’ (in Kolsto 1999: 607).

⁶ While most of the commentators consider Tibetans to be victims of forces of modernisation and Chinese oppression, scholars like Donald Lopez (1998) considers them victims of the Western perception of Tibetans as inherently religious, peaceful and spiritual. In contrast, this chapter recognises the need to consider Tibetans as agents in their own right. Interestingly, Brett Neilson even argues that the Shangri-la myth itself is significant for facilitating ‘a critical

about history and political status; at the same time it is intimately connected to cultural representations and identity discourses. It is not possible to speak of Tibet or Tibetans without taking into account the constitution of these categories within representational practices and identity discourses. The Tibet question is as much a political issue as it is connected to cultural politics of modern world. The very idea of Tibet and what it means to be Tibetan is constructed and contested within the matrix of identity and representation discourses, thus making it an integral part of the Tibet question.

The placing of the West within, rather than outside of, the discourses on the Tibet question can be examined by looking at the theme of Tibetan (trans)national identity and its interface with Western representations of Tibet. It could be argued that the Tibetan elite, especially in the diaspora, has adopted a Western representation of what Tibetans are supposed to be like as their own self-image. While I focus here on Tibetanness as defined in discourses circulating within the Tibetan diaspora, these representational practices play a significant role for Tibetans living within Tibet as well. As we shall see later, various studies of cultural and religious 'revival' (see Goldstein and Kapstein 1998), Lhasa protest movements (see Barnett and Akiner 1996; Mills 2001; Schwartz 1996), and identity articulations by Lhasa-Tibetans (see Adams 1996, 1998) have argued that political and cultural expressions by Tibetans inside Tibet negotiate with the dominant vocabulary offered by both Western and Chinese representations.

Within the fields of political and social studies, a diaspora is widely conceived as any segment of a people living outside their homeland. For instance, emphasising the need to look at the triadic networks of homeland (or trans-state organisation), host country and ethnic diaspora, Gabriel Sheffer says, 'Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining a strong sentimental and material link with their countries of origin- their homeland' (1986: 3). The recognition of diasporas as important international actors is a big step forward in the field of international politics (otherwise dominated by studies of nation-states), even though we have to avoid taking basic terms such as homeland, identity, and hostland as unproblematic. This allows us to take into consideration the crucial role played by the Tibetan diaspora in highlighting the case of Tibet as a problem of

utopianism that allows a reassessment of the Tibetan question outside the politics of territory' (2000: 95).

international politics. Though this has had little impact on the conduct of states vis-à-vis China – not surprising, given that the international community is precisely a community of recognised nation-states, a status denied to Tibet) – the Dalai Lama-led Tibetan diaspora is considered the legitimate speaker for the entire Tibetan population in the international arena. The story of the creation of the Tibetan community in exile illustrates the successful strategies of the Dalai Lama-led Tibetan government to foster and maintain a distinctive Tibetan national identity with a mix of religious, cultural and political elements. In this chapter, I focus on various embodied and embedded narratives shaping Tibetan political identity today, especially among diasporic Tibetans.

A noteworthy point may be made here. Diaspora is less a sub-category of the migrant community and more a subjective understanding of the experience of migration. Often in the current discourses on diaspora, the hybridity and liminality of the migrant position is celebrated. As scholarly discourse on population dispersion has shifted to ‘diaspora’, there has been a proliferation and valorisation of meanings of the term. The pain and suffering resulting from diaspora as *forced* migration/exile is sometimes ignored. For instance, there is a significant difference between the Tibetan diaspora in South Asia, and elsewhere in the West, and the South Asian diasporas in the West. While a sense of displacement underpins the experiences of both the categories, migration from south Asia to the West is largely a result of the pursuit of a better life. For Tibetans, the immediate causal factor has been the occupation of their ‘homeland’ by China and the desire to return to that homeland seems to be very strong. Thus, in the case of Tibetans, ‘diaspora’ denotes processes of flight, forced migration, identity fragmentation and reconstruction, transnationalism, and the persistent desire to return to the homeland. Following Steve Vertovec (1997), when I talk of Tibetan diaspora, I consider diaspora to be a particular social form, a type of consciousness, and a mode of cultural production.

Rather than take political identity as something given, we should see it as socially and politically constructed. In the words of Lisa Malkki: ‘Identity is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorisation by others...(it) is a creolized aggregate composed through bricolage’ (1992: 37). ‘Tibet’, in this sense is an

‘imagining community’.⁷ A unified Tibetan nation currently exists only through the anticipated (re)construction of its parts: occupied country, dispersed communities, and a globally networked politico-cultural support system of Tibet support groups (Venturino 1997: 103). At the same time, the contingency of identity does not preclude the vital importance of affirmations of essential subjectivity in the forging of national identity. Given the structure of the imagined community of nations dominated by Western ideas of governance and political expression, it is vital for the Tibetans to espouse their cause in terms of an essentialist notion of nationalism. Thus Tibetan national imagination is a product/process of strategic essentialism oriented towards the goal of reclaiming their homeland. This chapter takes into account both hybridity and claims to essentiality, which lie at the core of claims to Tibetanness. Part of this project will be to consider how Western representations, and this dominant expression in the form of Exotica Tibet, has affected what it means to be ‘Tibetan’ at the political level.

6B. Tibet as an imagining nation

The issue of Tibetan national identity inevitably involves the question of whether Tibet is/was a nation. While Tibetans argue that theirs was a historical nation, China denies this. This rhetoric ignores that the need to present one’s own community as a nation is a modern phenomenon. Tibet, which as a political entity operated with other external powers (especially Mongols and Hans) on principles such as patron-client relations and *chos srid gnyis Idan* (politics-religion combined), has become yet another victim of modern ideas such as territorial sovereignty and the separation of religion and the state. Before the twentieth century, politically, Tibet did not exist as a territorially bounded community operating on the principle of exclusive sovereignty.⁸ The political control of the Dalai Lamas hardly exceeded beyond Central Tibet/U-Tsang (now Tibet Autonomous Region, TAR), while Kham and Amdo (now part of the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gangsu and Yunan) were ruled by various small principalities with often overlapping influence (see Fig. II). It was only under

⁷ Benedict Anderson’s categorisation of nations as imagined community (1983) does not fully convey the sense of continuous imagination which goes into the making and existence of a nation, so, I prefer to use imagining. In the next chapter, I retheorise this as ‘re-imag(in)ing community’.

⁸ For an account of the attempts within Tibet to assert independence and bring about reforms between 1911 and 1949, see Goldstein 1989; Shakya 1999.

the thirteenth Dalai Lama that attempts were made to convert the 'Lamaist state' into a modern state. However, this self-conscious and often ambiguous process toward integration into the world order was cut short by the Chinese occupation beginning in 1950. Tibet has been brought into the international system but the agent of change is China, denying the right of self-determination to the Tibetans.

Both Tibetans and Chinese administrators realise that change was/is inevitable. What they struggle over is the question of agency. As James Mayall (1990) points out, nationalism has become structurally embedded as the basis of the modern state everywhere. Nationalism is on the one hand an ideological movement toward the construction of a nation. On the other hand it is a product of heightened consciousness of national identity among a people.

[T]he appeals to nationalism are always politically important – nationalism is still regarded as a (if not 'the') prime driver of and legitimator for political, government and state policy and action, both internal and external. Moreover, in that the distribution of power within political, social and economic structures, including global structures, tends to ensure that these structures are reproduced, political legitimacy and loyalty (i.e. nationalism) has a fundamental role in this process (Tooze 1996 xvii).

Given this scenario, it is hardly surprising that Tibetans have had to appropriate the language of nationalism in order to deal with both Chinese occupation and modernity. Tibetans claim that they have the right to determine the course of action that Tibet as a body politic, as a nation, should take. While the Tibetan issue is often discussed in terms of the preservation of a culture, the most important question concerns the right of people to self-determination. The Dalai Lama-led government in exile claims to speak for this right of all Tibetan people.

The whole of Tibet known as Cholka-Sum (U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo) should become a self-governing democratic political entity founded on law by agreement of the people for the common good and the protection of themselves and their environment, in association with the People's Republic of China (His Holiness the Dalai Lama 1988).

This statement reflects a desire to project Tibet as 'one' political unit, something that did not exist historically, at least during the modern period. This raises the question of the relevance of the European model of the nation state for many parts of the non-Western world.⁹ Present-day international politics ensures that claims to independence

⁹ Here it is sufficient to mention a few opinions on this. '[I]t is an error to fancy Thibet as a homogeneous whole under a central government. Local tribes do not have same respect for

are afforded more recognition when stated in terms of the nineteenth-century European ideal of the nation-state under a nationally representative government (Samuel 1993: 143). This makes the task of the Tibetans more difficult as it was never a centralised nation-state. The Anglo-Tibetan encounter forced the Tibetans to confront the differing perceptions of nation and state identity held by traditional and modern societies. And therefore, there were conscious attempts by the Tibetan government to model itself on a nation-state line. How far this project was successful is debatable. Sympathetic British Indian officials supported it in 1920s and 1930s. 'We do not want to encourage the Tibetans to become once more a warlike nation; but in these days a country must be able to defend itself, and it has always been our policy to assist Tibet to maintain her position as an independent autonomous State under the nominal suzerainty of China' (Chapman 1992: 110).

Interestingly, the Tibetan establishment in Dharamsala makes claims not only over Central Tibet, but also over Amdo and Kham. The claim is not based on historical evidence of political control, but on the existence of certain cultural and religious commonalities.¹⁰ Bell's distinction between 'political' and 'ethnographic' Tibet is

new Lhasa masters who lack the prestige of the Chinese *literati*' (David-Neel 1991: 173). Geoffrey Samuel (1993) argues that the misconceptions during the turn of the century regarding the dominance of the Lhasa state is because most of the observers were based in Lhasa and there they interacted with the elite who desired to assert the power and independence of the Lhasa government in relation to the Chinese government during the early twentieth century. This desire was seen as reflecting reality.

¹⁰ So, should the claim of the Tibetan government in exile to *represent* Tibetans of all three provinces be seen as a case of historical fraud? Certainly this is not necessarily the case. This distinction between 'political' and 'ethnographic' Tibet made by commentators including Bell, while relevant in certain sense, suffers from ethnocentrism. Concepts and categories used in the West are automatically considered to be transparently transferable and universally applicable. The Tibetan body politic is often read in such terms. While the close connection between politics, religion, and culture in the case of Tibet is recognised, analyses often fail to transcend the belief in the separation of the sacral and the temporal which lies at the base of Enlightenment thinking and informs most scholarly endeavours. In the case of Tibet, however, politics, culture, and religion are intrinsically interconnected. This can be seen in the concept of *chos srid gnyis Idan* (dual religious and secular system of government) which is said to have characterised the Tibetan polity before 1959 (for details, see Kolas 1996). The Dalai Lama combined both strands at the top of the 'religious' and 'secular' hierarchies. Despite the existence of local deities, rituals and practices, Lhasa acted as a nerve centre of religious practices. Not only was it the destination of many pilgrimage routes, it also had big monasteries (*gonpa*) of various prominent sects of Tibetan Buddhism. It was a centre for learning and for trade. Thus, the limited temporal authority of the so-called 'Lamaist state' (or the Lhasa government) did not affect the significant influence Lhasa exercised over the entire region inhabited by Tibetans. Since the Dalai Lama-led government in exile claims to be a continuation of the Lhasa government from 1959, it is within its right to speak for all Tibetans, especially in the long drawn situation of crises in which the historical markers of Tibetan identity are under the threat of erasure. This use of 'Tibet' as a political device is legitimised by

helpful here. While political Tibet was U-tsang, the boundary of ethnographic Tibet extended to include Amdo and Kham. What bound the people in the regions was not allegiance to one temporal authority, but elements of common culture and religion. These elements may be seen as forming the basis of a Tibetan *ethnie* or ethnic community. As Anthony Smith argues, *ethnie* includes a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared memory of a rich 'ethnohistory' (especially of a golden age), differentiating elements of common culture; association with specific homeland, and, lastly, a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of population (1991: 21). All these features were present in varying degrees in the history of Tibetans.

More often than not the proponents of nationalism take a primordialist view. Such a view has been rightly contested in the academic discourse on nationalism¹¹ and it has been argued that 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992) are used to create 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983). Nationalism is seen as a theory of legitimacy, 'a political principle that holds that the political and national unit should be congruent' (Gellner 1983: 1). According to their critics, instrumentalist scholars of nationalism often over-emphasise the capacity of nationalism as an ideology to engender nations. Smith argues how modern nationalism crucially depends on its primordial ethnic past (1991; see also 1996). However, I retain scepticism about the primordality of the past and, instead of trying to situate myself somewhere 'in-between' in the Instrumentalist-Primordialist debate, I adopt a discursive approach (see Balakrishnan 1996; Bhabha 1990; Chatterjee 1986, 1993) striving for a more diversified and inclusive understanding of nationalism which highlights its cross-cultural variants. While the centrality of a process of imagination in constituting a nation is noteworthy, the existence of an archive from which this process draws resources is also undeniable. While this archive shapes the imagining community, the process of imagination not only draws upon an existing archive, but in the process recreates it.

several instances of similar historical practices. Indeed, modern nation involves the binding of community into a territory as, in the words of Tony Bennett, 'occupants of a territory that has been historicized and subjects of a history that has been territorialized' (1995: 141).

¹¹ None of the prominent experts on nationalism speak about Tibet, except Eric Hobsbawm, who mentions Tibet only in passing as a possible exception to his theory: 'It is difficult to judge how far purely divine authority may have nation-making possibilities. The question must be left to the experts in the history of Mongols and Tibetans' (Hobsbawm 1990: 72).

In the case of Tibet, this archive may be seen in terms of what Hobsbawm calls 'proto-nationalism': 'variants of feeling of collective belonging which already existed and which could operate, as it were, potentially on a macro-political scale which could fit in with modern states and nations' (1990: 46). George Dreyfus (1994) has applied this idea of proto-nationalism to the Tibetan case. He argues that a sense of belonging to a unique community that is political, despite the lack of any institutional expression, can be found in various aspects of Tibetan life even before 1959. 'Treasures' (*gter ma*), a type of religious literature with a strong sense of nostalgia more popular among common people, such as *Mani bka'-bum*, often had distinct political messages. The paradigms defined by such *gter* in figures such as *Avalokitesvara* and virtuous king like *Strong-btsan-sgam-po* still define the contemporary Tibetan identity.

Even if we recognise that significant elements of Tibetan 'national' identity preceded twentieth century, it is the interaction with modernity and colonialism that gave specific meanings to elements of a common identity. Tibetanness is a product of processes of modernisation, colonialism and displacement. Before moving into a detailed discussion of diasporic Tibetanness, let me make a brief observation on the discourse of Tibetan national identity as circulating within Tibet.

6C. Discourse of Tibetanness as articulated within Tibet

Discussion of Tibetanness as being processed and produced in diaspora should not ignore Tibetan identity as articulated within Tibet. Limitations of space allow me to make only a few sweeping statements about the situation inside Tibet where the bulk of the Tibetan population lives. After suffering severe repression during the period of Cultural Revolution, Tibet has witnessed 'economic liberalisation' followed by some relaxation on religious practices. This, in turn, has led to a revival of cultural and religious identity. While there is little doubt that some cultural elements were encouraged by Chinese-Tibetan authorities in a typical modernist pattern of museumising 'exotic'/minority cultures, active support of the local people has been more important in this revival. However, as contributors to Goldstein and Kapstein (1998) point out, 'revival' is a problematic term for what is happening in Tibet both because it fails to appreciate changes and because its meaning is often conflated with restoration. Despite attempts to objectify culture, the latter is always in flux. In the case of Tibet, some individual traits are common with the past, some have changed in

appearance and some in the importance attached to them, and some are now extinct. Moreover, one should realise that what passes as revival is deeply informed by contemporary politics. The key issue affecting the revival is the Tibet question – the conflict over the political status of Tibet vis-à-vis China (Goldstein in Goldstein and Kapstein 1998: 14).

As frequent demonstrations, especially in Lhasa, indicate, religion still plays an important role in the assertion of national identity by the Tibetans. Most demonstrations start at the initiative of monks and nuns,¹² and most centre around the Jokhang temple in the Barkhor area of Lhasa. However, something basic has changed. While earlier revolts broke out for explicitly religious purposes, now a more instrumentalist and activist view of religion is taken (see Schwartz 1996). Use is made of the official policy of religious tolerance to make political demands. The priority of many monks and nuns who participate in the demonstrations, often at high costs (including arrest, torture, expulsion from institution, and in extreme cases, execution), seems to be the political struggle for independence (see Barnett and Akiner 1996).¹³ They are willing to risk the religious freedom granted to them for their political demands. Even in the name of religion what is emphasised is not aspects of Buddhism (which is limiting for any nationalist aspiration on account of its universalistic pretensions), but specifically Tibetan elements of the religion.

The religious/cultural revival, as well as instances of political protests, inside Tibet exemplifies a rich mixture of traditional and innovative strategies in Tibet's struggle for survival against an authoritarian state system. The Chinese official rhetoric of a 'multinational' state has offered the opportunity to Tibetans to reclaim, in part, a heterodox vision of history¹⁴ in which separateness and Tibetanness are highlighted and valorised. Often, the target of sporadic protests in Lhasa and elsewhere are the Western tourists who are considered potential supporters for the Tibetan cause. The

¹² Their role may be seen as that of disgruntled traditional intelligentsia described by Ernest Gellner (1983: 14).

¹³ Though some observers such as Tom Grunfeld (1988) are of the opinion that 'Independence is an abstract notion which most Tibetans do not seem to think about very much' (quoted in Sperling 1996), others have provided a convincing rebuttal of such views (see Schwartz 1996; see also Barnett and Akiner 1996).

¹⁴ This challenges the Chinese official history (Information Office 1992) that seeks to argue that Tibet has been in a dependent relationship to China since seventh century.

main factor influencing the political protests and assertion of national identity in Tibet, therefore, is not religion per se or its suppression, but Chinese political occupation.

In all these struggles over national identity, the key symbol for Tibetans has, not surprisingly, been the Dalai Lama. The Chinese realised the potential subversiveness of allowing Tibetans the religious freedom to worship his figure. They have thus tried to ban his worship and ‘encourage’ other Tibetan lamas to denounce him as a ‘splittist’ (one who is trying to split Tibet from its motherland, China). The Dalai Lama’s dual role as the head of religious and political systems has indeed been important. However, a significant innovation can be seen in this regard. The political side of *chos srid gnyis ldan* is identified with democracy, and young Tibetans look upon the Dalai Lama as a world leader and as a symbol of democracy and human rights (Schwartz 1996). As with former imperial powers, such as the British in India, the nationalists to a large extent have taken the discourses of the dominant power and used it against them. China’s claim that it is modernising Tibet is questioned by those who have developed an alternative vocabulary (and alternative meanings) on the basis of a continuing flow of information and ideas from China as well as outside world on democracy, human rights and national struggles (see Sperling 1996). Observers of Tibet are increasingly recognising this resilience among the Tibetans and various innovative uses to which traditions have been put in the service of national identity.¹⁵ Such critical endeavours are certainly a way forward as compared to the idea and practice of Exotica Tibet, of a ‘lost horizon’, a Shangri-la lost forever to the world, as espoused in most popular literature in the West.

6D. (Dis)placed Tibetans: nationalism in exile

A repressive state regime is not the only limitation upon articulations of national identity within Tibet. Lack of organised opposition to China may also be attributed to the fact that significant numbers of religious and lay elite of traditional Tibet (along with the Dalai Lama) fled across the border to India. Since 1959 more than a hundred thousand Tibetans have become refugees. Most of them live in various settlements in India and Nepal. Others have dispersed to several countries, including Australia, Switzerland, Canada and the US. The nerve centre of the refugee community,

¹⁵ The best place to find an analyses of observations made on protests and other nationalist articulations inside Tibet are Barnett and Akiner 1996, Mills 2001, and Schwartz 1996.

however, is Dharamsala, which is the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile. The Dalai Lama's government has since the beginning sought to project itself as a continuation of the pre-1959 Lhasa government. Though this government is not recognised by any state in the international community, for all practical purposes the Tibetans living in the diaspora, and many inside Tibet, consider it the rightful authority. Continuity is stressed. The authoritarian state apparatus in Chinese-occupied Tibet, combined with censorship of information, ensures that Tibetan nationalism is far more developed in the diasporic community. The discourses of international human rights, democracy, decolonisation, and self-determination have allowed sophisticated articulations of national identity among the Tibetans in exile. The idea in the world media of what constitutes Tibetanness often comes from the words and actions of the exile community.

Tibetanness, as many observers of Tibetan diasporic communities realise, is a highly contested and pluralistic identity. Tibetanness is articulated, in theory and in praxis, at several hierarchical as well as overlapping levels. It is a discursive product of many complementary and contesting dynamics such as policy pronouncements of Dharamsala, the politics of more radical elements, gendered and generational practices, Exotica Tibet, and so on. Several factors influence and shape it, some of these directly related to the politics of representation. These include refugee status,¹⁶ space-time projections of homeland,¹⁷ the personality of the Dalai Lama,¹⁸ the

¹⁶ Tibetans have been successful in avoiding assimilation with the host society by following a policy of limited acculturation. In Nepal and in parts of north India, Tibetans contribute substantially to the tourism industry, especially in the regions in which they live. Elsewhere, they concentrate more on specialised craft industries (see Methfessel 1997). Rather than competing with local Indians or Nepalese over scarce resources, they have established new enterprises, which also benefit locals with their spill-over effects. This does not mean that the relationship between refugees and locals is totally harmonious. As 1999 riots against Tibetans in Manali (India) shows, there are potential troublespots that need to be addressed by the community leaders as well as the Indian establishment. Since isolation is hardly a viable choice for most migrant communities (and individuals) when faced with problem of adjusting in the host society, the Tibetan establishment opted for a policy of limited acculturation as opposed to assimilation. While influences of popular Indian cultures including Bollywood are marked among the lay Tibetans, a sense of separate and distinct identity is prevalent. Both in rhetoric as well as in practice, the Tibetan refugee community has largely avoided the assimilative process of *sanskritisation* that effects most minority groups in India.

¹⁷ A particular space-time projection of 'homeland' is another constitutive factor in fostering Tibetan identity in the diaspora. Diasporic longing for the homeland is reflected in material as well as artistic production among exile communities. Images of Tibet, such as the Potala Palace, are favourite motifs. This nostalgia for space is complemented by nostalgia for time. It is not contemporary Tibet but pre-1959 Tibet, frozen in time, which defines the longing. As Clare Harris points out, many Tibetan refugee craftspeople and artists are involved in 'a

overriding need for the preservation of culture, Western audiences with preconceived notions about Tibet and Tibetans (Exotica Tibet), self-perception, and most importantly, the desire to project a sense of continuity in a changing external environment. In order to understand what the category 'Tibetan' means, it is important to look at these factors. Discussion of Exotica Tibet as one of these factor foregrounds the productive role played by representational practices.

6D.i. Interaction with Western audiences: Exotica Tibet

A very important dynamic shaping Tibetan political identity has been interaction with Western audiences. The role of the West can be examined as within rather than outside of the Tibet question by looking at the theme of Western representations of Tibet and its interface with Tibetan (trans)national identity. Scholars like Lopez (1998) show that Tibetans are 'prisoners of Shangri-la' – constrained by their image as a religious, peaceful, exotic and idyllic community.¹⁹ The dominant representation of Tibetans in the West, as discussed in chapter 5, presents them as peaceful, non-violent, religious,

nostalgic recreation of *temps perdus*; an inevitable process of conscious archaism' (1993: 112). In the diaspora, the role of memory is central to imagining Tibet as a nation since recreating and preserving the memories of Tibet is crucial for maintaining the vision of 'Free Tibet' as a common cause. These memories also provide the tools of expression, the language and the idioms of Tibetan unity and identity.

¹⁸ The Dalai Lama acts as a unifying symbol for matters of religion and politics. We may take the celebration of anniversaries in Dharamsala, particularly the March 10 Uprising Day and *Monlam* festival, as illustrating this. Taken together these two represent paradigm of *chos srid gnyis Idan* (religion and politics combined) with the Dalai Lama on the top. On the Uprising Day the secular government renews its worldly claims for national independence, using metaphors which are in currency in the international community. Mon-lam on the other hand attempts to ground the refugee society in the changelessness of the Buddhist doctrine, and the priesthood which embodies it. Both represent the dynamic of change and continuity, the nation and religion. The unifying symbol bridging both events is the Dalai Lama, the king and the god, the active agent between this world and the next. He presents contradictory images: a 'simple Buddhist monk'/ head of Tibetan Buddhism; human and god; world-renouncing/world-encompassing (Klieger 1994: 67). Personal loyalty to the Dalai Lama plays a key role in the government-in-exile's efforts to strengthen the sense of a unified Tibetan identity. In the words of Frank Korom, '...faith in Buddhism and in Dalai Lama's office has provided cohesion necessary for maintaining a form of "proto-nationalism" within a broadly dispersed world society' (1997a: 3).

The Dalai Lama is also the chief symbol of Tibetan cause in the international arena.

The unique role of the Dalai Lama, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, is perhaps the major reason for Tibet's international exposure. His spiritual, nonviolent approach and frequent travels around the world not only generate much interest in Tibetan Buddhism but also serve to maintain attention to the status of Tibetans and Chinese practices in the region (Gurr and Khosla 2001: 280-1).

¹⁹ Lopez argues that the current emphasis on Buddhist universalism in the teachings of the Dalai Lama as well as neo-Orientalist Western representations of Tibetans may be ultimately antithetical to the political case for an autonomous Tibet (1998: 206-7).

spiritual, compassionate, and close to nature.²⁰ A corollary to this representation is the idea that the inherently good-natured Tibetans are victims of forced modernisation brought about by Chinese rule. The emphasis is both on the uniqueness of the Tibetan culture and on its universal relevance.²¹

Exotica Tibet, presenting Tibetans as victims, has helped mobilise many non-Tibetans for the 'Save Tibet' cause.²² The Tibet movement, a term referring to transnational efforts made on the part of Tibetans and non-Tibetan supporters to demand the right of self-determination for the Tibetan people, has gained some high profile support, including Hollywood stars, US Congress members, and European members of parliament. The world-wide network of Tibet Support Groups (TSG) is unique in this respect. They include organisations focusing on a wide range of themes – Tibetan Buddhism, human rights, spreading awareness about the situation in Tibet, and demand for independence (rangzen is the term used for this). The presence of support for Tibet is particularly significant in the virtual world where most of the Internet sites related to Tibet are pro-Tibetan. In fact, there is an increasing realisation within the Tibetan diaspora of the possibilities offered by the Internet as a means for disseminating information and mobilising support. Though the motives of participants in the Tibet movement vary,²³ what seems to unite them is a broadly defined Tibet cause. When the Tibetans went in exile they found that 'Tibet' already existed in the Western imagination, and given their limited options, they conformed to that image in order to gain support (see Lopez 1998). Tibetans, Tibetophiles, and Tibetologists all have contributed to the romance of Tibet – to Exotica Tibet – which, as we shall discuss in greater detail later in the chapter, paradoxically renders problematic the

²⁰ In his submission to the 1993 Non Governmental Organisations at the 'United Nations world Conference on Human Rights', marking a significant departure from several Asian leaders who were arguing for 'Asian values' and 'Asian way', the Dalai Lama writes: 'It is natural and just for nations, peoples and individuals to demand respect for their rights and freedoms and to struggle to end oppression, racism, economic exploitation, military occupation, and various forms of colonialism and alien domination' (His Holiness the Dalai Lama 1993).

²¹ Clifford Bob (2002) writes how some post-colonial groups (he singles out the Tibetans) have gained global limelight while others have been unsuccessful.

²² Peter Bishop (2000) argues that the Tibetan appeals for understanding and assistance have also become contextualised alongside other forms of promotional media discourse, including commercial advertisements and rock concerts.

²³ 'The Tibet cause has attracted an exceptionally diverse group of people, some of whom see their activities on behalf of the cause as connected with Buddhist belief and practice, while others are concerned with human rights, opposing communism, and a range of other motivations' (Powers 2000: 3). Among these 'range of other motivations', New Age

struggle for independence from Chinese occupation. This support is often based on the supposed cultural uniqueness of Tibetans rather than on the recognition of the political right to self-determination. As Vanessa Baird recognises in *The New Internationalist* issue on Tibet, the romantic image has hampered Tibetan struggle for self-determination: 'If Tibetans are presented as a dreamy, unrealistic people, obsessed with religion, their struggle is unlikely to be taken seriously by a world driven by more secular values. Their demand for independence will be seen as pie-in-the-sky and their ability to rule themselves will be open to question' ('Tibet: a cause for courage' 1995: 1).

However, rather than paint Tibetans as victims, we can view the Shangri-la image in a different light. Exotica Tibet is not only restrictive of options, but is also 'a soft power resource that can be manipulated to get attention and to get some access to the stages of world politics' (Magnusson 2002: 211). For instance, Klieger (1997) argues that Tibetans have been active in the creation and presentation of their own identity.²⁴ Not only have they participated in portraying an image of themselves to outsiders, their self-perception too has been a result of this self-reflexivity. Calling this conscious and selective presentation of Self 'Tibetan hyperreality', he writes:

Tibetan hyperreality is created from a conscious and selective presentation of self to an audience with highly conditioned expectations. Tibetan culture as currently presented in most Tibetan cultural centres in the West is idealized, homogenated and pasteurized. It has...remarkably allowed the perpetuation of Tibetan identity despite the vicissitudes of exile (*Ibid.*: 67).

In the process of strategically deploying their culture to the Western audience for mobilising political support, Tibetans have redefined and reconstructed Tibetan culture and identity. The Dalai Lama-led government-in-exile self-consciously makes representations of reflexive, politicised notions of culture and identity which are dependent upon the globalised production of institutions and the flow of cultural resources made possible through the onslaught of modernity (see Huber 2001; McLagan 1997; see also Shakya 2001). Not only have they embraced modern

Orientalism is prominent. Though often New Age and Western Buddhism are conflated, mostly by their critics, they are quite distinct (see Vishvapani 1994).

²⁴ Klieger further argues that diasporic Tibetan identity formation is a result of ideological convergence between Western Shangri-la image and self-perception of Tibetans: '[a] collision has occurred between the Occidental paradigm of an Eastern paradise, Shangri-La, and an indigenous utopia which constructs a distanced, sacred Tibetan homeland upon the established Shambhala, Mt. Meru, Mt. Potala and divine rule mythology' (1997: 61).

technologies such as the Internet (see McLagan 1996) to promote their cause,²⁵ but they have also projected their culture as being compatible with universalising discourses such as environmentalism, (world) peace, and non-violence. Representations, politicised culture, and an interaction with a Western audience affect the 'domestic' and 'international' politics followed by the Tibetan elite in the diaspora. In their search for outside support, the Tibetan elite has been learning the language of international politics dominated by the Western powers (see Kolas 1996).

'We live in a nationalised world' and we tend to see the world with a 'nationalising eye' (Cubitt 1998: 1). Recognising the dominance of nationalism as a source of legitimacy in contemporary international politics, for example, the Tibetan government-in-exile has moulded its expositions on Tibetan identity accordingly. Though 'Old Tibet' had elements of *natio* (Lopez 1998),²⁶ Hobsbawm's proto-nationalism (Dreyfus 1994), and what Smith calls *ethnie* (Anand 2000: 273-4), a modern sense of nationhood²⁷ was absent (Ekvall 1960: 382). Tibet as a nation is not a historical reality but a product of post-exilic imagination.²⁸ The Western influence can also be seen in the evolving political structure of the government-in-exile. In fact, the Dharamsala establishment has been moving towards democratisation for gaining

²⁵ Though the odds are stacked against the Tibetans in the real world, in the virtual world it is a radically different situation. An overwhelming number of websites on Tibet are pro-Tibetan. Upon doing a search in Netscape on google.com using the word Tibet, out of first 100 links, only three were not connected to the Tibet movement (Dated 15 February 2001). To a certain extent, *Tibet online*, which claims to serve as a virtual community space for the Tibet movement, succeeds in its aim of levelling the playing field by leveraging the Internet's ability to harness grassroots support for Tibet's survival (Tibet Online 2001). Though there is a substantial gap between success in the virtual world and success in *real* world, with virtual world increasingly governing the real, maybe there is a glimmer of hope for the Tibetan cause.

²⁶ Lopez points out that Tibet was a *natio*, 'a community or condition of belonging, rather than a nation-state in the modern sense of the term, with its attendant secular state and polity, notions of citizenship, a global capitalist economy, membership in an international system of states...' (1998: 197-8).

²⁷ There is a vast literature exploring the different meanings attached to nation, nationalism, nationhood, and national identity. See Anderson 1983; Balakrishnan 1996; Bhabha 1990; Billig 1995; Chatterjee 1986; Eley and Suny 1996; Enloe 1989; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992; Smith 1991, 1996; Yuval-Davis 1997.

²⁸ This is not to deny that elements of modern nationalism had started to emerge inside Tibet as early as 1913 when the thirteenth Dalai Lama's proclamation upon his return from exile in 1913 showed a clear 'awareness of Tibet as a distinct country, defined by its culture and history' (Dreyfus 2002: 40). Further, popular movements against the Chinese during the 1950s, including the 'Four Rivers, Six Ranges' (*chu bzhi gang drug*) asserted distinct nationalism defined in opposition to Chinese occupation (see Shakya 1999). As Georges Dreyfus argues, the peculiarity of the nationalism that emerged in the 1950s is that it deploys traditional religious themes and values such as compassion, karma and the bond between Tibetans and Avalokitesvara, to define the nation (2002: 42).

legitimacy in the West. These developments may be explained in terms of an image-building exercise, steps taken towards keeping up with the times, response to pressures from within the refugee community, and finally, the Dalai Lama's personal initiative.

In complying with dominant representational regimes, Tibetans are following tactics common to many groups who try to counter their relative powerlessness by negotiating within the dominant representational regimes and selectively appropriating favourable aspects. While Tibet is an extreme case, 'due to relative powerlessness, anti-imperialist struggles often are compelled to utilise Western media in order to mobilise crucial world support' (Bishop 2000: 645). All third world resistance groups have to 'negotiate both the post-cold war reframing of global politics and the lingering traces of Western post-colonial fantasies about their country and culture' (Bishop 1998: 123). Mahatma Gandhi's adoption of the Orientalist trope of spiritualist Indians, feeding it into a wider political struggle against British imperialism as well as social evils within the Indian society, is a good example.

At the same time, these presentations should not be seen only in terms of a response to Orientalist representations, for often there are elements within the traditional society that facilitate this appropriation. The Dalai Lama speaks about spirituality and the peaceful nature of Tibetans. His Strasbourg Proposal of 15 June 1988 is an example: 'My country's unique history and profound spiritual heritage render it ideally suited for fulfilling the role of a sanctuary of peace at the heart of Asia' (His Holiness the Dalai Lama 1988). Though some historians may argue that there is a strong tradition of warriors²⁹ among groups of Tibetans, this does not undermine the Dalai Lama's claim about a 'profound spiritual heritage' for elements of compassion and the principle of non-violence were present within traditional Tibetan society. Such strategies are more about the selective appropriation of historical narratives for contemporary purposes than about specific historical truths. The specificity of these strategies is shaped by the contemporary vocabulary available for expression. The vocabularies of nationalism and transnationalism are two such discourses that the Tibetans have adopted to make their case.

6D.ii. Transnationalism in the service of nationalism

²⁹ Jamyang Norbu's *Warriors of Tibet* (1986) reveals how when faced with incursion, 'peaceful' Khampas did not hesitate to take up arms to defend their way of life

My analysis of Exotica Tibet thus shows that the West is not an ‘outside’ element in the Tibet question. Quite often, diasporas are considered to exist in opposition to nation-states, with diaspora consciousness correspondingly incommensurate with nationalism. James Clifford, for example, argues that diasporas can never be exclusively nationalist because they imply multiple attachments (1997: 135-6). However, in the case of the Tibetans, nationalist discourse is a product of the diaspora. Imagining Tibet as a nation is to a large extent a post-exilic phenomenon. The most sophisticated articulation of Tibetan national identity thus comes from the more radical sections of the Tibetan diaspora. Western representations and diaspora conditions have also contributed to a shift in emphasis from ethnicity (Tibetans as *tsampa* eaters) to religion (a ‘modern’ version of Tibetan Buddhism) as the basis of Tibetanness (Lopez 1998: 198).

At the same time, transnationalism, engendered substantially by the transnational Tibet movement, has been an integral part of Tibetan diasporic identity. This is not surprising given that ‘the Tibet movement represents an emergent form of transnational, intercultural political activism, one that is dependent upon the complex production and circulation of representations of “Tibetanness” in various arenas that cross cultural and national boundaries’ (McLagan 1997: 69; emphasis in original). Tibetan identity has strong constructive elements of transnationalism³⁰ including those that emphasise environment,³¹ peace, spiritualism, international human rights, universal compassion, and eclectic beliefs. As pointed out earlier, these are distinctly connected to Exotica Tibet. The constituency of Tibetan supporters often overlaps with other transnational social movements. Economically and politically, as well as symbolically, transnational connections feed into the Tibetan diaspora’s nationalism. While recognising the essentially *modern* aspect of the nationalist and transnationalist discourses prevalent among the Tibet diaspora, it cannot be denied that the traditional Tibetan principles of operating with the external powers have also facilitated this.

Working within the framework of a patron-client relationship, Tibetans have managed to construct and reinforce a national identity by drawing upon the patronage of

³⁰ Amy Mountcastle argues that on the whole ‘Tibetan identity’, as a public identity, is a product of global processes. See Mountcastle 1997.

³¹ For a critical discussion on the construction of a green Tibetan identity, see Huber 1997.

transnational networks and connections. Klieger's analysis of Tibetan nationalism as a modern manifestation of the 'patron-client dyad' argues that the Tibetans living in diaspora have been able to retain their status by converting the entire exile community into the client category (1994: 84-120). This is not to argue that a coherent ideology of nationalism accepted by the entire Tibetan diaspora has emerged. The idea of Tibet as a nation is a political construct that involves the manufacturing of unity out of tremendous difference and diversity.

Soliciting international support has been one of the main strategies of the Tibetan diaspora elite. The Dalai Lama's well-publicised and frequent trips to various countries are a significant part of this strategy of raising the profile of the Tibetan cause in the international media and mobilising public opinion in the Western states. Conspicuous avoidance of the Tibet question in the conventional fora of international relations, such as the lack of recognition of Tibetan statehood by any existing state, has forced the Tibetans to seek support through non-conventional means – cultural politics is a part of this. The ultimate goal behind the transnational mobilisation remains the assertion of the right to self-determination. Tibetanness thus is a transnational phenomenon, a political practice that transgresses national boundaries but does not question the spatial logic through which these boundaries have come to constitute and frame the conduct of international relations. In a poem of dedication at the beginning of his book, Palden Gyatso (1997) reflects a sentiment common to most Tibetans, a hope that international support might help them realise their goal of independence: '... And to all of you who inhabit the world who also believe in the virtues of truth, justice and decency...Help to deliver us. Help us to be free, to be independent, to be able to do what we choose - in our own country'.

The imaginative hold and consequent impact of Exotica Tibet is evident in the activities of various Tibet support groups. As I pointed out earlier, the support in the form of 'Free Tibet' movement is often based on the image of 'Tibet as defenseless underdog, a spiritual society that was minding its own business only to get crushed under the jackboot of an aggressive, materialist overlord' (Schell 2000: 206). However, even the cultivation of this victimisation paradigm reflects the agency of Tibetans. Though Tibetan global publicity campaigns consciously portray Tibetans as victims of Chinese oppression, this does not deny them their subjectivity. Instead, they have made conscious and extensive use of Western discourses – whether psychology,

philosophy, physics, personal growth, or holistic health – in their attempts both to communicate with Westerners and to reconstitute themselves in conditions of exile (Bishop 1997: 67). Tibetans have colluded with, as well as contested, various Western images of Tibet.

Though many Westerners may like to overrate their own importance in nurturing Tibetan resistance to China,³² resistance to domination always exists in all societies (Bass 1990: 218), and Tibet is no exception.³³ Dominant (in this case Western and Chinese) cultural and political ideas influence the precise forms that the resistance takes. In the diaspora, it is the preservation of the traditional culture and nationalism that are the main dynamic behind the politics of resistance. Within Tibet, it ranges from the protest movements demanding independence to forces demanding accommodation of special rights within the Chinese state structure. In either case, this reveals their political agency.

The extent to which the awareness-raising campaigns of the Tibet support groups in the West translate into substantive political support and activism is open to question. In fact, the existing support for the Tibetan cause is based on Exotica Tibet, particular representations of Tibetans as inherently spiritual and peaceful people. This restricts the alternatives available to those Tibetans (see Lazar 1998; Shakya 1991) who might be disillusioned with the Dalai Lama's insistence on non-violence and his renunciation of the demand for independence. Instead of deriving satisfaction solely from the high profile support for Tibet based on particularised images, many Tibetans are frustrated with the limitations imposed by this on their political struggle. Lhasang Tsering expresses this sentiment very clearly when he says that, '... as for our friends and

³² P. Christiaan Klieger expresses this sentiment clearly when he writes, that quite a few *injis* (i.e. Western foreigners) 'as quixotic would-be heros and heroines for the cause of Tibet, may think of martyrdom of their Western selves, becoming "knights of Shangri-La" to serve the timeless utopian dream. In dogged pursuit of the Other, however, Shangri-La exists only as a moment lived' (2002: x).

³³ Contrary to the commonly held assumption on all sides, even in theocratic, conservative, and 'feudal' society of 'Old Tibet' resistance to authority was never completely absent. For instance, Bell recalled theatre performances in Lhasa in which actors did not hesitate to ridicule certain aspects of their religion, and even less so of their officials (OIOC: 11). He further mentions a 'Sun body' play by Kyor-mo Lung-nga troupe in which there was an explicit anti-Chinese political allusion, with 'a kick for the Emperor of China' (*Ibid.*: 18- 19). Going back even earlier, Michael Aris talks of an eighteenth century writing by a Tibetan in which a positive sympathy can be detected for the undefeated Marathas and their long stand against both the Mughals and the British (Aris 1994: 12). All this challenges the image of a passive Tibetan society.

supporters, while we greatly appreciate their sympathy and support, it is not for them to determine what the goal should be' (1998: 43). *Exotica Tibet*, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, has disproportionately emphasised Tibetan Buddhism. This has led to the side-tracking of the political question of status of Tibet and the Tibetans' right to self-determination. Western state leaders who meet the Dalai Lama (for instance, American President Bush in May 2001; see 'Dalai Lama and Bush' 2001), go to great lengths to explain that it is a private meeting with a religious leader. The Dalai Lama, as a political leader, has a smaller audience in the West. And even when the political aspect of Tibet is raised in the international fora, it is considered a matter of human rights, not a question of self-determination. As Robbie Barnett (2001) points out, the adoption of a human rights model by Tibetan exile elite has severe limitations. First, it is ideologically indistinct as everyone pays lip service to it and, as a moral strategy, it lends itself to the blurring of distinctions between words and deeds. Second, the success of the human rights model appears to have been at the expense of concerns much more central for the Tibetans, such as the question of Tibet's political status. In the West, this model 'offered a language that could be used ambiguously so that the domestic audience would be seen as criticizing China while Chinese officials might be persuaded that the criticisms were sufficiently mild so as not to be threatening to fundamental concerns' (Barnett 2001: 291).

Thus, while moulding their identity discourses according to Western exoticised imagery (*Exotica Tibet*) has helped Tibetans in gaining substantial popular support, there is a strong realisation among many that this is not an end in itself. As Shakya points out, unlike other international political problems such as the Palestinian one, the Tibetan issue is seen in terms of sentimentality. 'If the Tibetan issue is to be taken seriously, Tibet must be liberated from both the Western imagination and the myth of Shangri-la' (Shakya 1991: 23). It therefore comes as no big surprise that while the international support for Palestinians often comes from other third world countries, Tibet support groups are more common in the civil society of the first world.³⁴ This

³⁴ There is another explanation to this difference in support base between the Palestinian and the Tibetan cause. The former is looked at as a case of European imperialism and settler colonialism on the part of Israel (see Beit-Hallahmi 1993; Finkelstein 1995; Lilienthal 1978). Therefore, decolonisation demands the recognition of Palestinian statehood. On the other hand, as the 'coloniser' in the case of Tibet is another postcolonial state, the matter is looked at as an internal issue of a minority nationality, a problem that raises uncomfortable questions within many postcolonial states. This discomfort also reveals the refusal of international community

has partly to do with the limited success of Tibetan government-in-exile in establishing networks in the third world. The Tibetan exiles turned for support to former colonisers rather than to the formerly colonised and chose public relations rather than political alliance as its form of politics (Barnett 2001: 279).

6E. Tibetan national identity: tensions within

Arguments such as Avtar Brah's that 'the political process of *proclaiming* a specific collective identity entails the *creation* of a collective identity out of the myriad collage-like fragments of the mind' (1996: 124; emphasis in original) enable us to read Tibetan political identity discursively. For the Tibetan exiles, the very act of presenting oneself as displaced member of a bounded territory of Tibet is a highly political act. For Tibet is an imagining entity in all senses of the word since people identifying themselves as Tibetan come from the Greater Tibet region which includes areas which have never been under the temporal control of the Lhasa government of U-Tsang (Central Tibet). However, the Tibetan government-in-exile claims to be a representative of all the Tibetans.

What bound the people in the regions was not allegiance to one temporal authority, but certain commonalties in religion and culture. The legitimacy of the Dharamsala establishment's temporal claims on behalf of all Tibetans is drawn from these cultural similarities. The structure of the government-in-exile as well as the map of Tibet that is in circulation in the diaspora reflects post-exile politics rather than some historical marker. Similarly, a pan-Tibetan marker of identity - *nangpa* (Buddhist 'insiders') subsumes all pre-exilic sectarian and regional identities. Unlike in the past when individuals identified their home with a specific village or locality, now Tibet in its entirety is imagined as the homeland to which all Tibetans desire to return. As Steven Venturino argues, in the Tibetan diaspora, the notion of a heterogeneous group putting aside its differences and 'pulling together' is an important part of the struggle for independence and the maintenance of national identity (1997: 114-5). The institutional as well as the symbolic practices of the Dalai Lama-led Dharamsala establishment

to follow the logic of decolonisation to allow the right of self-determination to all the peoples, not only those under European imperialism.

encourage people to act socially and cohesively as Tibetans in an 'alien' environment.³⁵

The emphasis on constructing a unity does not mean an elision of differences within the community. Like any other vibrant society, one can find here differences based on generation, socialisation, gender, religiosity, region, sect, period of departure from Tibet, class, and political opinions (for instance, see Diehl 1998). The popular tendency within the media, many Tibet Support Groups, and many Tibetans themselves, is to represent the Tibetan diaspora community as united under the leadership of the Dalai Lama. However, significant differences can be seen within the diaspora between the Tibetans coming from the U-Tsang region and the Khampas and Amdowas. It is definitely witnessed in religious matters, as in the *Shugden* affair³⁶ or Rumtek monastery controversy,³⁷ or for that matter in less publicised differences within the monasteries in South Asia between the old arrivals and the new comers (see Strom 1997: 39-42). Significant generational differences are also found within the diaspora on matters such as the role of religion in society (is it an end in itself or a cultural resource?); out migration from South Asia (whether to stay in the region close to the community or move out to the Western countries for improvement in individual standard of living?); influence of popular Indian and Western culture (should one assimilate with the dominant culture or retain separation?); and political priorities

³⁵ The connection between the symbolism implicit in Tibetan government-in-exile structure and the homeland of Tibet is evident in the evolving democratic system with a National Assembly at the top. Here, a quota system operates according to which there are an equal number of representatives for three principal regions of Tibet, same number of representatives from each of five major religious sects, a few representatives from outside South Asia, and finally a few nominated members. The Tibetans in diaspora therefore vote to make a symbolic claim to Tibet rather than represent their own interests.

³⁶ Dorje Shugden is an important protector deity of the Gelugpas, the politically dominant Tibetan sect headed by the Dalai Lama. The fierce Shugden protects the purity of the Gelug way, especially against contamination by the sometimes rival Nyingma sect. Early this century, a charismatic 'revival' movement grew up around Shugden, strongly influencing later generations of Gelug monks and increasing tension with the Nyingma. But in 1976, on the advice of the Nechung oracle, the Dalai Lama banned the worship of Shugden, sparking a controversy that has lately become quite bitter and occasionally violent. This controversy received significant publicity in the international media. Though some media accounts paint Shugden supporters as fundamentalists clinging to Tibet's shamanic past, Lopez (1998) argues that the struggle may actually represent a desire to reassert regional and specifically Tibetan culture. In contrast, the Dalai Lama, in order to constitute Tibet as a unified nation and avoid sectarian tensions, is focusing on universalistic Buddhism.

³⁷ The Kagyupa sect has its headquarters-in-exile at Sikkim's Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre. The Rumtek monastery has been wrecked by controversy - ever since its founder, the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa died in 1991 - over who is his 'real incarnate'.

(whether to emphasise preservation of traditional Tibetan culture or focus primarily on the explicitly political demands?).³⁸

In political matters too the diaspora is divided. Study of the statements by the Tibetan government-in-exile reveals an ambiguity in their primary political demands (at <http://www.tibet.com>). While the right of Tibetans to self-determination is asserted, often it is argued in terms of significant and real autonomy within China, sometimes on the model of 'One Country, Two Systems' as has been followed in the case of Hong Kong. On the other hand, there are more radical intellectuals within the Tibetan diaspora who make a strong and unambiguous case for struggling towards complete independence (see Lazar 1998; Norbu 1999b).³⁹ There are several other opinions on this matter. A middle ground is expressed in the *Hear Tibet! Campaign* calling for a United Nations-backed referendum within Tibet allowing the Tibetan people themselves to choose their own political future (see Hear Tibet! 2001).

Thus, a unified Tibetan-in-exile identity espoused on behalf of the Tibetan diaspora is a rhetorical device and imaginary construct. At the same time, it would be naïve to dismiss considerations of the identity question on this ground only for all the identities are in the last instance a product of the imagination. Following Judith Butler:

To take the construction of the subject as a political problematic is not the same as doing away with the subject; to deconstruct the subject is not the same as doing away the concept; on the contrary, deconstruction implies not only that we suspend all commitments to that to which the term 'subject', refers, and that we consider the linguistic functions it serves in the consolidation and concealment of authority. To deconstruct is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question and, perhaps most importantly, to open up a term, like the subject, to a reusage or redeployment that previously has not been authorized (1992: 15).

Though Tibetanness is an imagined and contested construct, it has its own truth effects on those who consider themselves Tibetans. Recognition of Tibetans as an 'imagining community' problematises simplistic interrogations of Tibetanness. It does not undermine the quest of a people for self-determination.

³⁸ Magazines including *Tibetan Review* often provide space for the dissenting voices of younger generations. An interesting difference is seen when it comes to assessing the assimilative influence of dominant culture on Tibetan life – while the new refugees' 'Sinicisation' is ridiculed and considered as unpatriotic, elements of 'Indianisation' and 'Westernisation' are often tolerated.

³⁹ Tibetan intellectuals while demanding independence, also reveal an awareness of the need to learn from historical experiences of decolonisation. For instance, Tsarong (1997) suggests

6F. Conclusion

To conclude, Tibetan national identity both inside and outside Tibet is a product of constant negotiation and renegotiation. Personal experience mediates national identity. The 'transnational' element is as significant a part of Tibetan nationalism, as is the 'indigenous' element. Tibetanness among those living in exile is as much a discursive product of displacement (conditions of diaspora) as of sense of belonging (to a 'distinctive nation'). It is a productive process of creative negotiation with Western representations, with Exotica Tibet. My discussion of poetics and politics of Exotica Tibet seeks to blur the distinctions between the cultural and the political and to underline the constitutive relations between identity and representation within world politics in the post-colonial world. In order to carry on a postcolonial examination of the politics of Exotica Tibet, we have to move beyond the conventional sense of the term 'political' and challenge the boundaries between the political and the cultural. This is what I do in the next chapter, where I offer new ways of theorising Tibetanness through postcoloniality-inspired symbolic geography and a discursive approach that foregrounds the constitutive and performative role played by representation in identity. This should be seen as underlining a postcolonial analytical approach that will help provide a critical reading of world politics, taking into account the centrality of representation.

possible ways in which the Tibetan struggle may learn from decolonisation that took place in most of Asia and Africa during the twentieth century.

Chapter 7: Re-Imag(in)ing Tibetanness: Postcolonial symbolic geography, culture, and the politics of Exotica Tibet¹

‘We have to *learn to think differently* – in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain more: *to feel differently*’ (Nietzsche quoted in Connolly 1993: xiv).

Tibetanness, or Tibetan identity, is a contingent product of negotiations among several complementary and contradictory processes. These processes may be looked at in terms of different pairs of contrastive dynamics. Some of these are: the imperatives of a culture-in-displacement and the need to present an overarching stable identity; interaction with host societies and an avoidance of cultural assimilation into hegemonic cultural formations there; emphasis upon tradition as the defining characteristic and the need to present exiled Tibetans as ‘modern’; the desire to present Tibetan culture as unique while at the same time highlighting its universal features; interaction with a sympathetic Western audience and emphasising difference from Western cultures; and finally, the desire to project a sense of continuity with the past while distancing oneself from oppressive elements of history. These dynamics impact upon the theory and praxis of Tibetanness at several overlapping and hierarchical levels.² In this chapter, by putting the symbolism of Dharamsala/*dharmashala*/*dharamshala* (please note the difference in the placing of ‘a’ highlighting different pronunciations) under a postcolonial critical scrutiny, I offer a deconstructive reading of Tibetan identity problematic that, instead of jettisoning Tibetan agency, affirms it.

¹ This chapter is based on my field trip to Dharamsala that was funded by a travel grant from the British Academy Society for South Asian Studies. At Dharamsala, I gained a lot from conversations with Topden Tsering and Thupten Samphel at the government-in-exile’s Department of Information and International Relations. However, the responsibility for all the comments made here are solely mine. My special thanks to Christiaan Klieger and many others at the International Association for Tibetan Studies conference (2000) for their encouragement and useful comments. A version of this has been published (Anand 2002a) by Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden.

² My contention is that drawing upon critical social and cultural theories and deploying them contextually is a better approach than shying away from them out of a fear of theoretical imperialism. Often well-intentioned scholars avoid using Western theoretical ideas in the case of the non-West in general and Tibet in particular since history is replete with examples of similar moves to the detriment of local people. However, moving towards a purely empirical study is not the right solution since this idea of pure empiricism is the most hegemonic of Western paradigms. It is complicit with dominant regimes of patriarchal and racialised power. So, in my opinion, it is better to adopt the critical theory inspired idea of theorising everything since it reveals all practices as political, and therefore contestable. Even though these themes have originated in the West, they question the assumption of superiority of the West and thus leave room for alliances with ‘progressive’ ideas from the non-Western world. Approaches that

The politics of Exotica Tibet – this politics is about the effect of representations on the represented and questions the arbitrary boundary between the cultural and the political – is evident both in the symbolic geography of Dharamsala and in Tibetanness. In the course of this inquiry, I highlight the symbolism of Dharamsala/*dharmashala*/*dharamshala* as contested, put forward the dominant story of Tibetanness before offering alternative reading, and finally, offer a new way of theorising Tibetanness as discursively constituted both by *roots* and *routes*.

Before moving further, let me elaborate on Dharamsala/*dharmashala*/*dharamshala*. Dharamsala is a place in north India (see Fig. III) which is currently the residence of the Dalai Lama and the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile. The place name Dharamsala comes from the Sanskrit word *dharmashala* comprised of two parts – *dharma* ('religion') and *shala* (house). So, *dharmashala* means the 'abode of the god' and 'house of religion'. But in everyday Hindi language, often pronounced as *dharamshala*, it means a 'temporary station', a 'guest house', lying usually on routes of pilgrimage. An important feature of *dharamshala* is that it provides free or sometimes very inexpensive temporary accommodation to travellers. So Dharamsala is the place, *dharmashala* means 'house of religion', and *dharamshala* stands for 'guesthouse'.

I examine the symbolic geography of Dharamsala.³ Why Dharamsala and not any other, even bigger, Tibetan refugee settlement elsewhere? Why symbolic geography and not cultural geography? A focus on Dharamsala does not deny the important role played by several other places inhabited by the Tibetan diaspora. However, I chose Dharamsala since it plays a very crucial role as a symbolic nerve centre from which articulations of Tibetanness emerge. These articulations affect the perception of the

deny a role to theory often operate on unconscious theoretical assumptions that are left uninterrogated.

³ Dharamsala is the seat of Tibetan government-in-exile. Though the 'government' is not recognised by any state in the international community, for Tibetan people themselves, especially those living in diaspora, it is a legitimate representative. The place name is spelt either Dharamsala or Dharamshala, but the government-in-exile, following Indian government surveys, uses the former spelling.

Dharamsala is a common name used for Dharamsala proper (the Kotwali Bazaar area) or the Lower Dharamsala, McLeod Gunj (also spelt Mcleodganj and McLeod Ganj) or the Upper Dharamsala, and Gangchen Kyishong (the complex of Central Tibetan Administration). Lower Dharamsala is a predominantly Indian area. While many Tibetan establishments are located here, there are many more in the vicinity of Dharamsala (for instance the Norbulingka

international media. But even more importantly, they are reabsorbed into the exile community's self-perception. Thus, instead of representations as merely reflective of identity, they are constitutive of the very entity they seek to represent.

A focus on Dharamsala as a place will be complemented by an interrogation of the root words *dharmashala*/*dharamshala* in order to tease out the various possible alternative narratives of Tibetanness. My contention is that the symbolic geography of the place, along with a particular implication of the words *dharmashala* and *dharamshala*, supports the dominant story preferred by the exile elite and their non-Tibetan supporters. This story is consonant with Exotica Tibet, which has the effect of fostering a 'salvage mentality', a strong preservation ethos. Here the emphasis is on the projection of Dharamsala as the 'Little Lhasa in India',⁴ a temporary home preserving a historical culture in its pure form before an inevitable return to the original homeland.

However, an alternative reading of Dharamsala/*dharmashala*/*dharamshala* provides a different story, one that affords a theoretically sophisticated conceptualisation of Tibetanness and therefore challenges the dominant story. Such a reading not only looks at identity as always already in process, but also affirms the diaspora experience as something more than a temporary aberration. The two different narratives of diasporic Tibetan identity I posit are not strictly contradictory since they can be retheorised together productively, through postcolonial IR theory, by combining a 'deconstructive attitude' with an 'agential politics of identity', which, as Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan points out, 'makes it possible for movements to commit themselves simultaneously to the task of affirming concrete projects of identity on behalf of the dominated and subjugated knowledges and to the utopian or long-term project of interrogating identity-as-such' (1996: xxiii).

Institute). Dharamsala is used as a generic name for all of these. Location wise, it can be characterised as a hill station in the north Indian state of Himachal Pradesh.

⁴ There is a further issue of temporality in the projection as 'Little Lhasa'. Though the 'Little Lhasa' was put on the map of global tourism mostly after the mid 1980s, the name had come to be associated with McLeod Gunj from the sixties itself (see the passing reference to it in Avendon 1984: 103).

As I discussed in chapter 4, to subject the notion of identity to a deconstructive critique is not to negate or refuse it. Instead the deconstruction of terms such as identity means,

to continue to use them, to repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power ... If a deconstruction of the materiality of bodies suspends and problematizes the traditional ontological referent of the term, it does not freeze, banish, render useless, or deplete of meaning the usage of the term; on the contrary, it provides the conditions to *mobilize* the signifier in the service of an alternative production (Butler 1992: 17).

Within this approach, my alternative reading highlights several things within discourses of Tibetanness at once – the politics of place and the place of politics; the social construction of space and the spatialised social relations; and the rhetoric of essentialism and the practice of strategic essentialism.

7A. Symbolism of Dharamsala: a contested terrain

Conventionally, identity was seen as primordial and natural, culture as organically rooted in a particular geographical space, and place as an inert space over which history is enacted. Place was seen as providing ‘an inert, fixed, isotropic back-drop to the real stuff of politics and history’ (Keith and Pile 1997: 4). On this view, Dharamsala is only a static stage for the theatrics of Tibetan diasporic culture and politics. However, this notion of fixity hides the fact that the geography of Dharamsala has had a changing symbolic role for the Tibetan diaspora. A movement from a poor refugee settlement to one of the most popular tourist destinations in India, a change from a small-dilapidated village to a cosmopolitan small town – these are indicative as well as constitutive of changes within the Tibetan exile community. The questioning of the edifice of the conventional geographical imagination by a ‘cultural turn’ within the field influenced by poststructuralism and postcolonialism makes it possible to study Dharamsala’s symbolic geography. For place and space are now seen in social terms – not only do they shape social relations, but more importantly, they themselves are discursively constituted by social forces.

Spatialities, a term that recognises the social construction of space and place, can be invoked to study how landscapes themselves are laden with multiple meanings. ‘Spatialities have always produced landscapes that are loaded with ethical, epistemological and aestheticized meanings’ (Keith and Pile 1993: 26). That

Dharamsala has come to acquire multiple layers of not always harmonious meaning is therefore not surprising. While for some (the Tibetan refugees) it is a place of refuge from oppression, for others (the Chinese government) it is a centre of seditious activities. For some (local Indians) it is a vital opportunity for material advancement, for others (many Western tourists) it is a spiritual refuge from the crass materialism of modern Western societies. For some (the Tibetans as well as non-Tibetan Buddhists) it is a centre of pilgrimage, for others (many Indian tourists) it is merely a site of curiosity. All these ascribed meanings, some complementary and some contradictory, problematise any simplistic and holistic reading of the symbolic geography of Dharamsala. Rather than treating such tensions and contradictions as regrettable, they should be seen as productive of the wider Tibetan diasporic identity-in-process.

Postcolonial criticality stresses the importance of recognising the complexly intertwined and mutually constitutive relationship between imaginary and material geography. 'Imaginary and material geographies are not incommensurate, nor is one simply the product, a disempowered surplus, of the other' (Jacobs 1996: 158). Instead of treating the symbolic in opposition to the material, a richer conceptualisation recognises that there is no 'actual' which can be accessed independently of inter-subjectivity, that there is no category of the 'natural' which is not mediated through culture. This would facilitate an understanding of the spatialised politics of identity as well as the identity politics of space. The former might include a consideration of how particular imaginings of a unified homeland of Tibet shape the discourses of Tibetanness. A discussion of the identity politics of space might, on the other hand, consider how different groups, including the Tibetan government-in-exile, ordinary Tibetan refugees, Tibetans inside Tibet, the Chinese government, the Western sympathisers, and the local Himachalis, ascribe their own meanings to the place of Dharamsala.

Recognition that all geographies have acquired contested meanings through continuous processes of individual and collective imagination does not preclude a consideration of the physical and structural factors at work. For instance, though the residence of the Dalai Lama and the existence of a government-in-exile are among the more important factors, the physical location of Dharamsala in the hills of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh has also facilitated its projection and promotion as a 'Little Lhasa'. Given the reputation of Lhasa as lying on the 'roof of the world', it is difficult

to imagine a place in the plains (rather than hills) of India being promoted in the same way. Travel writings that emphasise the relative inaccessibility of Dharamsala⁵ are quite common. This resonates with the reputation of Lhasa as the 'Forbidden City' at the 'roof of the world'. In a certain sense, Dharamsala acts as an accessible substitute for those travellers (often white and Western)⁶ whose imaginations have been influenced by the earlier writing of Imperialist adventurers, 'the trespassers on the roof of the world' (to evoke the title of Peter Hopkirk's book, 1983). Thus, the mountainous terrain of McLeod Gunj and its distance from any big city contributes to the symbolic geography of Dharamsala.

The most important structural factor shaping the symbolic geography of Dharamsala is the imperative of refugee status. The locations of Tibetan settlements have been decided entirely by Indian central and state governments. For instance, The Dalai Lama shifted from Mussorie to Dharamsala on Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's advice in 1960. An abandoned British hill station, McLeod Gunj was offered as a suitable quiet place for the Dalai Lama.⁷ The transfer of the Central Tibetan Administration (the government-in-exile) followed soon after. Unlike in Lhasa where the three big monasteries of the Gelugpa order were close to the Dalai Lama's seat, in India these monasteries have been re-established in far off places, due to the limitations of land available for settlement. The refugee status of Tibetans in South Asia prohibits them from owning immovable property unless offered by the host government. So, any consideration of the symbolic geography of Dharamsala needs to keep these physical and structural factors in mind.

Before dwelling more on Dharamsala and the politics of identity, it should be pointed out that the place that is commonly designated as the 'Little Lhasa' is actually McLeod Gunj. As the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Department board reads: 'Welcome

⁵ As compared to most other hill-stations in India, Dharamsala has no direct railway connection to any major city. The nearest railhead is 85 kilometers away.

⁶ There seems to be a difference of motive for travelling to Dharamsala between (white) Westerners and others. The influence of Exotica Tibet is less noticeable in the case of Japanese and Korean visitors (for whom Dharamsala is often only one part of a Buddhist pilgrimage circuit in India) or Indian tourists (for whom it is a replacement for crowded hill stations like Simla). This is not to say that all the Westerners who come here are affected by the Shangri-la myth (since many come here for the same reasons as they visit Kullu, Manali, or Goa – the 'hippy trail') or that all non-Western tourists are free from it.

to McLeodganj, the little Lhasa in India'. The multilayered meanings in this name (McLeod Gunj) may be explored further (something not feasible within the space of this chapter) – British imperialism,⁸ development of hill stations as places of refuge for the imperial class, the indigenisation of names, and so on. It can be read as indicating the important role played by British Imperial practices in framing the various aspects of Tibetan question. The distinction between Lower and Upper Dharamsala also reflects a gap between the local population and the refugees. While Tibetans here have generally managed to create their own niche in the wider society, the assertion of difference also leaves the potential open for conflict if the locals perceive the refugees to be a source of problems.⁹ The government-in-exile promotes the name Dharamsala, and not McLeod Gunj, as the 'Little Lhasa'. This may be because Tibetan institutions and establishments are spread throughout the vicinity of Dharamsala. But how far the name Dharamsala itself may have inspired it is an open question for the literal meaning of *Dharmashala* – 'the house of god/religion/dharma' – resonates well with the location of the Dalai Lama's residence and several religious institutions here. Indirectly, the choice of name with its association with spiritualism and faith makes it more appealing to Western tourists too.

7B. Dharamsala as a temporary home: the dominant story

What are the specific ways in which the politics of place as embodied in Dharamsala inform the discourses of Tibetan identity? By drawing upon the usage of the word *dharmashala/dharamshala*, we can theorise Tibetan identity discourse in broadly two ways – one offering the dominant story and the other allowing an alternative reading (discussed in section 7D). *Dharamshala* in popular Hindi usage refers to a 'temporary home', a 'guest house'. The dominant theorisation, which has a wide currency among the Tibetan Government and nationalists as well as non-Tibetan supporters of the Tibetan cause, interprets the experience of diaspora as a temporary and regrettable

⁷ The crucial role played by the Nowrojee family (the biggest proprietor here) in encouraging the development of 'Little Lhasa' needs to be kept in mind. The Nowrojee store's pivotal location at the McLeod Gunj bus stop stands as a silent symbol of this role.

⁸ The place is named after Sir Donald Friel McLeod, lieutenant governor of Punjab in mid nineteenth century.

⁹ Though it is rare for such tensions between Tibetans and local Indians to burst out in full-fledged rioting, the resentment of the locals against Tibetans, who are perceived as wealthier, is evident. I say this from my personal experience of talking to many Indian taxi drivers and shopkeepers. Since for them I was an insider (with Indian nationality), they often expressed their anxiety about the Tibetan 'others'.

phenomenon. And indeed, the place Dharamsala is seen as a temporary home with the final destination being the original homeland of Tibet. The exile is seen as a break in the evolution of an ancient civilisation in Tibet, a time when it is vital to preserve a pure form of this civilisation since it is under erasure in the original home. As my discussion of Exotica Tibet has shown, in journalistic and travel writings, one often comes across eulogies to a lost Shangri-la in Tibet (particularly Lhasa) and observations on how the forces of modernisation infused under the Chinese rule have spelt doom for the Tibetan culture. Such observations stand in contrast to those about the Tibetan communities living in South Asia, particularly in the area surrounding Dharamsala. In this case, though the cosmopolitan and eclectic cultural scene of McLeod Gunj is recognised, often the emphasis is on the success story of Tibetans in preserving their culture. 'Working hard to rebuild their lives and preserve their distinctive and timeless culture and lifestyle, these people, from difficult beginnings, have become arguably the most successful refugee community in the world whilst continuing the non violent struggle for Tibet's freedom in exile' (Barker 1999). The maintenance of Tibetan identity is seen as a functional expression of this culture.

If we are to identify one crucial theme running through the collective discourses and practices of the Tibetan diaspora, it is the preservation of tradition and culture. When some Tibetans, following the Dalai Lama in 1959, left their country as refugees, a need to preserve the traditional religion and culture in the diaspora was felt. This became particularly acute as markers of Tibetan life came under attack during the Cultural Revolution in China and then, since the 1980s, the Chinese authorities sought to follow a dual policy of political repression and economic liberalisation.¹⁰ The acute fear that Tibetan culture would become extinct in its homeland underlines the predominance of a 'salvage mentality', a preservation ethos in the Tibetan diaspora. This also provides legitimacy to the diaspora's claim to be a true representative of Tibet, the custodian of an endangered culture.

It is thus not surprising that Dharamsala is projected as the 'Little Lhasa' in India and several dynamics support such a depiction. Not only is this the residence of the Dalai

¹⁰ Chinese policies have not remained constant. Cultural revival that initially took place in the Tibetan regions often led to political protests. As a result, since the early nineties, there has been a reassertion of political control. For analyses of this 'cultural revival' see Goldstein and Kapstein 1998. For discussion on the rich symbolic and political content of the protests see Barnett and Akiner 1996, and Schwartz 1996.

Lama and (therefore) a place of pilgrimage for many Tibetans and non-Tibetan Buddhists, but it is also the focus for the individual, communal and institutional practices of Tibetan culture. Earlier pilgrims used to visit Lhasa, which for them was a source of refuge from the everydayness of life with hope of good in the next life. Now refugee status is itself often seen as a sort of pilgrimage during which a *darshan* ('sight') of the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala provides compensation for hardship. As a result, new refugees are first stationed in Dharamsala, helped to meet the Dalai Lama, and only then sent to resettlement camps.

This projection also provides legitimacy to the claims that the Central Tibetan Administration is a government-in-exile, a continuation of the pre-1959 Lhasa government, and therefore the rightful representative of all Tibetan people. It provides added validation to the political struggle for self-determination in Tibet. Dharamsala is perceived as the temporary capital of the entire Tibetan world and the Tibet movement'. Conscious efforts have been made to recapture what has been called the spirit of 'Old Tibet' by recreating in Dharamsala, for instance, Tsuglakhang ('Central cathedral') as an equivalent of Lhasa's Jokhang temple.

The symbolic representation of Dharamsala as Little Lhasa, as Thupten Samphel of the government-in-exile's Department for Information and International Relations (DIIR) pointed out, is to convey that what has been destroyed is being recreated (Personal Interview, January 2000). This idea of the recreation of a civilisation and the preservation of culture is the single most important strand of Tibetan identity problematic and is conspicuously evident in Dharamsala's geography.

The institutionalised expression of this theme of the preservation of culture is best found at the Norbulingka Institute, dedicated explicitly to the preservation of Tibetan culture in both literary and artistic forms. Activities and publications of the Institute expressly represent a unique ancient culture that needs to be preserved from possible extinction. For instance, in the Norbulingka's Centre for Arts, the skills preserved and passed on through training and apprenticeship include statue making, *thangka* painting, appliqué and tailoring, woodcarving, carpentry and metal craft. It is emphasised that the practice of making traditional works of art such as religious statues and *thangkas* only in response to the customer's order is a continuation of earlier practices where patrons would personally commission artists to do such work.

Norbulingka is keen 'to preserve the relationship between patron and artist free from the taint of commercialisation' (Norbulingka Institute, 2000).

Even the Dalai Lama considers preservation to be the single most important achievement of the exile community. He points out that the pure form of culture is now found outside rather than inside Tibet (Powell 1992: 384). The idea that Tibetan culture in diaspora is more authentic than the one prevalent in Chinese-controlled Tibet is supported by a few factors. One of them is the passing down of cultural authority through the practice of reincarnation. A significant part of Tibetan culture and religion has been embodied within reincarnate lamas, the most important being the Dalai Lama himself. And many of them left Tibet to become a part of the diaspora. The struggle between the Dalai Lama and Beijing over the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama¹¹ reinforces the Dharamsala establishment's desire to prevent this process from getting into the wrong and 'inauthentic' hands. While outside (read Chinese) influence is resisted, there have been instances where the practice has been deployed to incorporate ethnically non-Tibetan individuals as *nang-pa* (the Buddhist 'insider').¹²

The idea of true cultural authority as existing in exile rather than within Tibet is also supported by the presence of some great mastercraftsmen¹³ who had been trained in their art in the 'Old Tibet' and then moved to exile. These artists are regarded as 'precious' since they are seen as having direct experience of 'authentic Old Tibet'.¹⁴ Moreover, because of Exotica Tibet and a desire to gain Western support, the exile elite has tended to favour certain strands of Tibetan culture as more authentic and therefore worthy of patronage. For instance, cultural aspects highlighting sectarian

¹¹ The Panchen Lama's importance within Tibetan Buddhism is next only to the Dalai Lama. To undermine the child, who was recognised as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama (and therefore the Xith in the line) by the Dalai Lama, Chinese government imprisoned him and has recognised another child as the true reincarnation. For an account over this struggle, see Hilton (2000).

¹² The most (in)famous instance of this is the recognition by Penor Rinpoche of the Hollywood actor Steven Segal as a reincarnation of the seventeenth century hidden treasure revealer Chungdrag Dorje of Palyul Monastery.

¹³ The emphasis in 'craftsmen' is deliberate in order to highlight the gendered character of traditional cultural practices and their reinforcement by preservation ethos. For instance, in the Norbulingka I was told that statue-making is not meant for women. Not surprisingly, most women were concentrated in sections such as tailoring. But I also came across women artists in other areas including painting.

¹⁴ One such artist is Penpa Dorje, confirmed as a 'master statue maker' in 1973 by the Dalai Lama.

differences are often under-emphasised in favour of pan-Tibetan identity markers. Here, the ultimate cultural authority has come to be associated with the Dalai Lama himself.¹⁵

An interrelated thematic aspect of the symbolic geography of Dharamsala is the role of memory in housing a distinct Tibetan identity. Exotica Tibet has directly influenced how Tibetans have constructed their memories of a lost homeland. The names of many establishments in Dharamsala – not only of Tibetan governmental and non-governmental institutions, but also the commercial establishments – resonate with specifically Tibetan idioms. For instance, if one walks up the Jogibara Road from the Amnye Machen Institute to the right and Gaden Choeling Nunnery to the left, one finds names such as Amdo Cha-Chung Restaurant, Lhasa Tailors, Café Shambhala, Tsongkha Restaurant, Drepung Loseling Guest House, Tibet Lhoka Café, etc. Similarly, on the Bhagsu Road starting from the bus stop, one comes across Potala Tours & Travels, Dhompatsang Boutique and Handicraft, Rangzen Café, Tara Café, and Tashi Kangsar Travel Lodge, to mention just a few. Other names, more directly influenced by Exotica Tibet, specifically deploy the ideas of loss and longing, such as the Tibet Memory Restaurant, Lhasa Tailors, Lhasa Hotel, and Hotel Tibet (the hotel belongs to the government-in-exile). It may be possible that an important factor influencing the naming practice could be the nostalgia for Tibet and the desire to create familiarity in strange places. If you don't find Tibetan names in the Little Lhasa, where else can you expect to find them?

7C. Culture and the politics of place: some conceptual problems with the dominant story

However, this dominant story of 'Little Lhasa' as a temporary station where Tibetan culture is being preserved is highly problematic, both practically and theoretically. While in practical terms, this simple story is complicated by the experiences of living as refugees, it is also open to serious theoretical challenges because of the unproblematic acceptance of a stylised understanding of the basic concepts of identity and culture.

¹⁵ For a discussion of how Dharamsala assumes a canonical role in religious art, see Harris 1999.

Let us first take the theme of the preservation of Tibetan culture. Though the predominant emphasis remains on preserving tradition, the impact of drastic change in the context of cultural production is evident even in the traditional areas. Unlike in Tibet where the monastic institutions were the sole custodian of religion, in the diaspora the task of preserving the culture is shared by modern institutions established by the exile administration (see Kolas 1996). The institutions of culture such as museums, libraries and institutes established by the government-in-exile are considered repositories of authentic Tibetan culture. These are modelled on Western ideas of cultural preservation. The ‘culture of Tibet’ is in a sense being constructed and objectified through the new institutions and through the ideas of ‘culture’ itself. Particular ideas of Tibet, influenced by Exotica Tibet, are created and embedded in the exhibitionary forms of a range of cultural practices and institutions. A relatively fluid mixture of traditions is being bounded, fixed and recorded much more efficiently than ever before. Maintaining and recreating a Tibetan identity in exile involves a self-conscious display of Tibetan Buddhist religion and an organised construction of Tibetan culture. As Kolas argues, ‘contained within secular institutions, religious expressions have become the objects of Tibetan culture, which represent Tibetan identity to the outside world’ (*Ibid.*: 58-59). This attempt to preserve traditional culture in the modern world has inevitably led to a secularisation and objectification of it.¹⁶ Capturing the spirit of ‘Old Tibet’, after all, involves a selective construction of traditions. For instance, when discussing the various styles of Tibetan painting, Clare Harris points out that the dominant style is *new Menri* whose purity is at best ‘a series of re-inventions’ (1999: 69). The traditional cultural practices are often laden with contemporary political meanings.¹⁷

¹⁶ As Rinzin Thargyal (1997) points out, this process of secularisation, which is an epiphenomenon of societal forces, should not be confused with secularism, which is an ideology. He argues that Tibetan Buddhism (*chos*) has potent democratic principles, which is leading to secularisation and therefore any simplistic reading of this process, as indicative of separation of religion and politics is wrong. While one can appreciate his anxiety to legitimise changes towards democracy in terms of traditional religion, it does not stand very comfortably with frequent statements of Dalai Lama himself that he wishes to retire from political life once Tibetans get to exercise their right of self-determination.

¹⁷ As Margaret Nowak pointed out, the Tibetan youths in diaspora use three types of ideological strategies: a less devotional, more politically motivated reconsideration of Buddhist traditions; a neopuritanical concern for maintaining the purity of essential Tibetan symbolic forms; and, a sometimes conventional, sometimes extended interpretation of the metaphorical concept of *rangzen* (translated roughly as self-power, independence) (1984: 139).

Without belittling these attempts at maintaining distinctive traditions of creative and artistic expression, at a theoretical level, this over-emphasis on preservation should also be seen as being conceptually problematic because it takes a sanitised view of what culture means. Culture is seen as a thing out there that can be identified, mapped, practised, and preserved. Such a conceptualisation of culture essentialises and naturalises what is socially and politically constructed and contested. It ignores the fact that culture is a 'dynamic mix of symbols, beliefs, languages and practices which people create, not a fixed thing or entity governing humans' (Anderson and Gale 1992: 3). Cultural identities, far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, are actually subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power. Tibetan culture is as much a process as it is a product of particular historical processes. An explicit recognition of this would certainly challenge the dominant tendency to make exilic 'Tibet' fit Exotica Tibet. This Shangri-la paradigm is something that could lead to the Tibetan culture remaining on 'a life-support system in perpetuity' without much chance of self-regeneration (Harris 1999: 197).

The effect of commodification and tourism on particular expressions of 'authentic' Tibetan culture is also important. As Robert E. Wood argues, tourism affects not only the ways in which ethnic identities are asserted, but also which ethnic markers are chosen to symbolise group membership and culture (1998: 222).¹⁸ The desire to attract tourists has played a significant role in the depiction of Dharamsala as the 'Little Lhasa'.

Even the names of most establishments in McLeod Gunj, particularly the commercial ones, highlight the importance of tourism and the desire to appeal to outsiders' idea of Tibet as a Shangri-la. For instance, on the Jogibara Road this is exemplified in names such as Yak Restaurant, Snow Land Restaurants, Hotel Shangri-la, Snow Lion complex (hotel, restaurant, and medical store), and Travel Tibet Tailoring Shop. The fact that many of such establishments are owned by local Indians goes on to show that a primary motive for such naming practices is to appeal to tourists. In fact, this dynamic is also underlined by the presence of other shops with names that are unabashedly orientalist, such as Dreaming Oriental Carpet Cottage Handicrafts, Royal

¹⁸ Further, Dean MacCannell writes, 'tourism is a primary ground for the production of new cultural forms on a global base...[it] is not just an aggregate of merely commercial activities; it

Asia Art, Heaven Art, and Rising Horizon Café. It is hard to imagine the old city of Lhasa having place names such as Shangri-la, Dreaming Oriental, or Yeti before its incorporation into the international tourism networks. My hypothesis is that while Tibetan names such as Amnye Machen Institute, Gangchen Kyishong and lhagyal-ri reflect a desire to recreate a familiar environment, other more orientalist names such as Shangri-la and Travel Tibet pander to exoticised representations of Tibet. This is supported by the fact that while the former are predominantly used in Tibetan governmental and nongovernmental institutions, the latter are found exclusively in commercial establishments.

The preservation ethos is not hegemonic in the Tibetan diaspora. Counter hegemonic spaces are available in Dharamsala for innovative and more contemporary practices of culture. Even these practitioners are not in opposition to traditional culture but complementary to it. For instance, though the catalogues and brochures of Norbulingka 'forget' to mention this, they have a section where young artists work on contemporary themes. Moreover, even the traditional cultural practices are often laden with contemporary political meanings. The Namgyalma Stupa¹⁹ in the centre of McLeod Gunj, erected during the sixties as a memorial to the Tibetans who lost their lives fighting against the Chinese, is a good example of this combination of traditional religion with modern politics. Similarly, the dolls made in the traditional style at Norbulingka carry *Free Tibet* badges. The political context of occupation and coercion is always present even in the space provided for traditional art and crafts. Despite the dominance of preservation ethos, the focus of identification has now shifted from local contexts to a national one- instead of individual localities and regions, all of Tibet is collectively imagined as the homeland to which the refugees hope one day to return.

Rather than seeing culture as informing politics and vice versa, the entire category of culture has to be understood as political. For instance, both the desire and the attempts of preserving a culture under threat is an act of resistance both to dominant forces of modernisation and to the Chinese occupation. Therefore, we must consider not only the way in which politics affects the works of art, but in what sense an artwork may itself constitute a political act or statement, rather than being conceived merely as the

is also an ideological framing of history, nature, and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture and nature to its own needs' (1992: 1).

result of a political intention (Millon and Nochlin 1978). It is difficult to miss the centrality of the Tibetan political cause in McLeod Gunj's landscape as 'Free Tibet', 'Boycott Chinese Goods', and similar stickers and posters are glaringly visible. The symbolic geography of Dharamsala in this sense is a geography of resistance as much as it is a geography of regeneration. In other words, the cultural is political.

An integral part of Dharamsala's geography is the festivals and various other events occurring throughout the year. Rather than seeing the festivals as merely reflecting religious beliefs or political rituals, they may be studied to reveal the techniques and dynamics through which the narratives, symbolic spaces and the collective fantasies of communal identities are reproduced and regulated among the Tibetans and their supporters. One recalls here Hugh Richardson's observations on the great ceremonies of Lhasa – although full of colour and spectacle, they were not mere pageantry but were essential rites for the well-being of the church (*sic*) and the state (Richardson 1993). Examples of such festivals that are replete with multiple meanings are Losar (February 12), Tibetan Uprising Day (March 10), the Dalai Lama's birthday (July 6), Democracy Day of Tibet (September 2), the commemoration of the awarding of Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama (December 10). Paul Connerton's observation that 'the ritual performances and commemorative ceremonies are important in building up collective memory, which in turn is crucial for the development of a sense of home' (Kong and Yeoh 1997: 217) is also applicable in the case of the Tibetan diaspora.

Though the focus is on the preservation of culture, a visible feature of the symbolic geography of Dharamsala is hybridity. In their everyday life, Tibetan refugees in Dharamsala and elsewhere in South Asia negotiate with the popular culture of India; it should come as no surprise, then, that Bollywood has a very significant influence on the identity of many Tibetans. Everywhere I went, I found a striking similarity between Tibetan songs and songs from both popular Hindi films, and Western pop music.

However, such observations, while complicating the notion of preservation of a 'pure' culture, do not militate against a more sophisticated conception of Tibetan culture. This new generation may not practice 'authentic' versions of culture, but, as evidenced

¹⁹ This Buddhist stupa ('monument') is surrounded by prayer wheels and has a statue of Sakyamuni Buddha enshrined in a small chamber.

from the activities of the Tibet Youth Congress, their creative negotiations with dominant cultures around them do not hamper their politicisation. On the contrary, the ability simultaneously to negotiate and resist varied cultural practices makes the diasporic Tibetans well placed to carry forward their political movement in a rapidly changing world. This simultaneous negotiation, appropriation and resistance is a key feature of postcoloniality.

7D. Challenging the dominant paradigm: Reading cultural identity in terms of *roots and routes*

What does a postcolonial reading strategy look like? How can it seek to contextualise a politics of place and identity which takes into account the politics of representation? Here I wish to make six interrelated points relating to Tibetan identity – roots and routes of culture are complementary, identity is discursively produced, Exotica Tibet plays a productive role, the Dalai Lama's role is vital, an image of the 'homeland' is crucial, and finally, Tibet is a re-imag(in)ing construct.

First, the space for a different reading is afforded by the word *dharamshala* itself. As pointed out earlier, the word indicates a temporary home and this temporariness has been a central motif in Tibetan diasporic identity discourses. Tibet, the original homeland, is foregrounded as the final destination in these discourses and it also permeates the material as well as the performative cultural expressions of the Tibetans in diaspora. While focusing on the starting and finishing stations, such a reading ignores the crucial element of the travel itself. *Dharamshala* is not only a temporary home, but also a temporary stop on the way to somewhere else. It is a house offering temporary hospitality to travellers on their way. One does not travel from home to *dharamshala* to return back to the home. Travel is transformative and constitutive. Rather, *dharamshala* is a temporary shelter to facilitate travel from one place to some other place. If instead of focusing solely on the theme of *return*, we look at the process and experience of journey itself, we may be better placed to appreciate the conundrum of Tibetan identity politics.

As James Clifford points in a different context, 'practices of displacement might emerge as *constitutive* of cultural meanings rather than as their simple transfer or

extension' (1997: 3).²⁰ Instead of concentrating solely on the essence, the *roots* of Tibetan identity, we should look at the processes that constitute the *routes* travelled, including the creation of a pan-Tibetan exilic identity. Adoption of such a view allows us to appreciate the ambiguities involved in the project of cultural preservation as well as the changes that come about in the life of a community of people. While understanding the need to espouse one's cause in terms of an essential identity, the contingency of such claims is not papered over – and herein lies the strength of the alternative theorisation. Therefore, instead of framing an artificial opposition between the roots of culture and the routes of culture, we may look at them as complementary. For this false dichotomy is sustained only by the conventional view of culture as rooted in a particular place. If we look, on the other hand, at the roots as contingent foundations that are always already contested, we can begin to appreciate the complementarity. This is similar to what Bhabha has to say about culture as transnational and translational.

Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary political discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement ... Culture is translational because such spatial histories of displacement ... make the question of how culture signifies, or what is signified by *culture*, a rather complex issue (Bhabha 1994: 172; emphasis in original).

Second, recognition of the contingent nature of identity does not delegitimise identity claims marshalled by Tibetans for their cause. It simply draws attention to the strategic nature of such claims. This position is possible if one adopts a discursive approach to identity which sees identification not as an artefact or an outcome but as a construction, as something *always in process*. Though not without its determinate conditions of existence, including the material and symbolic resources required to sustain it, identification is in the end conditional, inevitably lodged in contingency. 'Identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption' (Hall 1996: 3). We need to recognise that its popular usage notwithstanding, the concept does not signal a stable core of self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without any substantial change. On the contrary, we should accept that identities are always and already fragmented

²⁰ Cf. Nevzat Soguk and Geoffrey Whitehall who argue that '[p]eoples and cultures are always (sometimes, in spite of themselves) "wanderingly grounded" in transversal spaces'. Transversality, following from Edouard Glissant, refers to 'a historical process which has always been contingent, always refusing "sovereign territory", sovereign powers to contain peoples and places, and sovereign voice to convince people that it is the sovereign space and territory, permanently there, in existence, inescapable and necessary' (1999: 683, 697).

and fractured; they are never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. Modifying Judith Butler's reading of gender to talk about identity in general, it should be clarified that

if ... [identity] is constructed, it is not necessarily constructed by an 'I' or a 'we' who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of 'before'. Indeed, it is unclear that there can be an 'I' or a 'we' who has not been submitted, subjected to ... [identity], where ... [identification] is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being. Subjected to ... [identity], but subjectivated by ... [identity], the 'I' neither preceded nor follows the process of this ... [identification], but emerges only within and as the matrix of ... [process of identification] (1993: 7).

Indeed, Butler's idea of performativity is helpful here. As she succinctly puts it, 'Identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (1990: 25).²¹ She uses performativity in the context of sex and gender, persuasively arguing that 'the anticipation conjures its object'. Performativity is not 'the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains'; production of the (gendered) subject is not a singular or deliberate 'act', but, rather, the 'reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names' (Butler 1993: 2). Challenging the notion that nature is to culture as sex is to gender, Butler retheorises gender as 'the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or a "natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive", prior to culture, a politically neutral space *on which* culture acts' (Butler 1999: 11; emphasis in original).

[Gender] operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates. In the first instance, then, the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is *not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual*, which achieves its effects through its *naturalization* in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration (*Ibid.*: xiv-xv; emphases added).

Further, performativity shifts the attention away from 'construction' to 'a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter' (Butler 1993: 9).

Applying this idea to the Tibetan case, we may see Tibetan identity as constituted by particular processes and practices, and not as some universal, timeless fixed thing.

²¹ Performativity is not to be confused with performance. As Butler clarifies, performative act 'is not primarily theatrical; indeed, its apparent theatricality is produced to the extent that its historicity remains dissimulated...' (1993: 12).

Tibetan nationalism is conjured up by the anticipation of an essential Tibetanness, and to be effective, it needs to be repeated again and again; it is a process not a product. It is this 'anticipation' of the essence of Tibet, an essential Tibetanness, which is constitutively linked up with Exotica Tibet and Tibetanness.

Rather than seeing the identity question as a matter of simple historical investigation, we can deal with it in terms of the deployment of resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being. The idea of symbolic geography encapsulates such a discursive approach since instead of considering the ideas of locality and community as naturally given, it focuses on social and political processes of place-making in Dharamsala. A discursive approach does not deny any act of communal political activism. It only reveals it as contingent, as strategic rather than as something unambiguously natural. The Tibetan claims to 'an essential identity, while demonstrably imaginary, constructed, and teleological, are no less essential in that they serve as foundational claims that *operate* politically, socially, and, for many, spiritually' (Venturino 1997: 108; emphasis added).

Third, connected to the issue of a discursive approach to identity questions is an explicit recognition of the constitutive role played by Exotica Tibet. Representations, especially the Western ones, have had a significant impact on the symbolic geography of Dharamsala and Tibetan identity discourses. The desire to secure patronage from sympathetic outsiders, elicit support for the Tibetan political cause, and make a living through commercial processes – all these forces have contributed to a self-reflexive adoption of Western representations of Tibetans as a part of Tibetanness. Image has been translated into identity. The representation of Tibetans as inherently religious and spiritual has certainly contributed to the mushrooming of Yoga classes, Retreat Centres, and Meditation Schools in Dharamsala. At the same time, we must keep in mind the fact that the Tibetan exiles are not unique in that Western representations have a major effect on identity practices. As Toni Huber (2001) argues, recent reflexive notions of Tibetan culture and identity witnessed in exile should be understood as products of a complex transnational politics of identity within which populations such as the Tibetan exiles are increasingly representing themselves and being represented by others. One such identity discourse, which Huber highlights, is connected to environmentalism. The presence within Dharamsala of Green Hotel and Green Cyber Café, Vegetarian Health Food, and the like may be understood as a

conscious desire to appropriate this particular discourse as a part of identity formation. The symbolic geography of 'Little Lhasa' questions the premise that Tibetans are innocent victims—'prisoners of Shangri-la'. Instead, even while recognising the unequal power relations, one must recognise that the Tibetan exiles possess agency and subjectivity.²² That this '*agency is always and only a political prerogative*' and that 'the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency... [it is a] loss of epistemological certainty, but this loss of certainty does not necessarily entail political nihilism as its result' (Butler 1992: 13, 12, 17; emphasis in original).

Fourth, an integral part of Dharamsala as well as Tibetan diasporic identity is the crucial role played by the personality as well as the figure of the Dalai Lama. His smiling face adorns almost every establishment here, including the shops owned by non-Tibetans.²³ More than anything else, it is his residence here that contributes to the transformation of Dharamsala into 'Little Lhasa'. He has a central position as the symbol of Tibet among Tibetan refugees and in the international media. Within discourses of Tibetanness, the Dalai Lama is 'neither wholly transcendent (and thereby out of this world) nor wholly immanent (enmeshed in temporalities like the rest of us), but an ambiguous symbol imbued with the qualities of both' (Nowak 1984: 30). The XIVth Dalai Lama has come to acquire an unprecedented position. He combines the role of the supreme leader of the entire Tibetan Buddhist community with the role of the chief spokesperson of Buddhist Modernism. He is as much a world spiritual leader as the undisputed leader of the Tibetan political cause (Lopez 1998: 181-207). This mix of uniqueness with universalism and of a national cause with transnationalism is also underlined within Dharamsala's symbolic geography.

Fifth, though for the Tibetans the memory, the ideal and the image of the land from which they have been exiled have been a vital force in the struggle for national recognition, the notion of return to the homeland is problematic. This problematisation should not be seen in terms of a pessimistic scenario in which original Tibet has been destroyed and can never be retrieved. Instead, it guards against any naïve imagination of a particularised space-time projection of Tibet as a timeless construct. Of course, this theme of return to the homeland is common to many exiled communities. The

²² This is something that has been done effectively by the contributors to Klieger 2002, Korom 1997a and 1997b.

Palestinians are a good comparative example. In both cases one sees how the longing for home has changed over time from return to specific villages and particular dwellings to an emphasis on a collective national return to 'the homeland' conceived more abstractly. Writing specifically about the Palestinians, George Bisharat (1997) points out that in exile there occurs a displacement of a community, once understood as being rooted in particular localities, to the level of the nation. Homeland is conceived as a moral as well as a geographical location.

Lastly, the adoption of a different reading strategy also foregrounds the idea of Tibet as a *re-imag(in)ing construct*. Following Benedict Anderson's theory of nations as imagined communities (Anderson 1983), Tibet can be seen as an imagined construct. However, the use of the form *imagining* rather than *imagined* indicates that the process of imagination is a continuous one. And then, since the Dharamsala establishment plays a crucial role in shaping this imagining process according to some particular images and representations, I put the 'in' within parenthesis. The process is as much one of imaging as it is of imagining. The prefix 're' is to counter any sense of simplistic linearity associated with the process of imagining Tibet as a nation.

However, this theorisation of Tibet as a discursive re-imag(in)ing does not deny the real desires and feelings of the people towards it. Instead, it promotes a historicisation and politicisation of such desires and feelings. It calls for special attention to be given to the ways spaces and places are made, imagined, contested, enforced, and reimagined. One needs to accept that given the limited vocabulary available to Tibetans to espouse their cause in the international arena, use of the somewhat old-fashioned concept of nationalism is perfectly understandable. As Gaim Kibreab points out, in a world where rights such as equal treatment, access to sources of livelihoods, rights of freedom of movement and residence, and the like are apportioned on the basis of territorially anchored identities, the identity people gain from their association with a particular place is an indispensable instrument to a socially and economically fulfilling life (2000: 384-428). Though a re-imag(in)ing construct, Tibet has a *real* impact on the lives of many people, and this itself provides legitimacy to those struggling for the self-determination of Tibetans. My discursive theorisation does not render this struggle problematic. At the theoretical level it calls for a

²³ Apart from Indian Banks, the only exception to prevalence of the Dalai Lama's picture that I came across was a shop selling *Desi Sharaab* ('country alcohol') on the Jogibara Road.

reconceptualisation of basic themes involved in the articulation of a Tibetan identification process as encapsulated within Dharamsala's symbolic geography. And at the level of political praxis, it simply warns against any naïve ideas about nationalism, return to homeland, and the like.

7E. Conclusion: affirming Tibetanness through its problematisation

By way of a conclusion, I would like to clarify that this postcolonial reading based on a different understanding of the words *dharamshala/dharmashala* should not be seen as an alternative to the more common story discussed earlier in the chapter. For the political practices embedded within Dharamsala's symbolic geography defy any clear categorisation in either of the two conceptual frameworks. My approach appreciates the practical need for espousing Tibetan identity as a strategic essentialism. At the same time, it highlights the need to recognise at a theoretical level the contingent character of these claims. A sophisticated postcolonial theorisation of Tibetanness in terms of symbolic geography facilitates such a two pronged approach, while at the same time recognising the arbitrariness involved in any distinction between theory and practice or between cultural and political identity discourses. Apart from other things, it also recognises the politics of Exotica Tibet – the constitutive relation between Western representations and Tibetan identity discourses, that is, between Exotica Tibet and Tibetanness.

Chapter 8: Concluding remarks on world politics, representation, identity

‘[T]his book has no straightforward thesis or conclusion’ (Walker 1993: 21).

‘The reason I can do English stuff or even sometimes French stuff is not my personal acumen. It’s the history of postcolonial peoples. Our access into universality was to learn Western discourses. I call us the wild anthropologists’ (Spivak in Sharpe 1992).

To avoid incorporation by mainstream IR, my attempt is to ‘forget IR theory’ (Bleiker 1997) by ‘doing innovative analyses of international political questions that are not addressed to some disciplinary mainstream of IR’ (Weber 1999: 116). This act of forgetting does not mean ignoring IR completely, for any such attempt will leave intact a disciplinary endeavour that has significant purchase on the understanding and construction of world politics. Rather, this ‘forgetting’, at least for me, involves unprivileging the dominant modes of analysis of world politics and learning to ‘think differently’. From an IR perspective, the learning process within this thesis has involved journeying into the *exotic* thoughtscape of social theory, postcolonialism, diaspora studies, cultural theory, colonial discourse analysis, Tibetology, and so on. The journey has involved shedding old baggage and picking up new; it has temporary halts, but only an arbitrary beginning and an even more contingent end. The thesis is, in this sense, a journal of my theoretical and empirical journey.

My analyses has involved three ‘de-’s (deparochialising, deconstructive analysis and description) and three ‘re-’s (representation, reimagining and retheorising). After introducing the Tibet question, I set up the argument for a postcolonial IR that seeks to reveal ethnocentrism (and a lack of concern for the issues central to the lives of peoples in non-West) of mainstream (and sometimes even critical) IR and *deparochialise* them. The rest of my endeavour does not always ‘use’ insights from postcolonialism and IR theory, but is inspired by postcoloniality (a postcolonial critical attitude). This is because, following Sylvester (2002), we can *sight*, *cite* as well as *site* criticality and dissent in postcoloniality. The examination of the theme of *representation* within IR and social, cultural and postcolonial theory in chapter 3 foregrounds my theoretical beliefs in a social

constructionist approach to representation and the discursive constitution of reality. Representation, especially the Western representation of the non-West, is central to the study of IR as it is a crucial dynamic of world politics, often supporting the dominant truth regimes and structures of power. While critical IR has focused mainly on the constitutive function of representation in generating and sustaining particular foreign policy regimes and on the identity politics of the representer. What about the impact of Western representations on the represented? By ignoring this, critical IR leaves itself open to the charge of West-centrism. My thesis rectifies this bias and through the empirical study of Western representations of Tibet (Exotica Tibet) highlights its productive and restrictive effects on the non-West. Exotica Tibet is theorised in terms of its poetics and politics. Chapters 4 and 5 explicate the poetics of Exotica Tibet – how Tibet has been represented in the twentieth century, while chapters 6 and 7 expound the politics of Exotica Tibet – the effects of representations on Tibetan political and cultural identity discourses. Chapter 4 offers a *deconstructive analysis* of Western representational practices by studying some common rhetorical tropes, modes, and strategies of representation. Chapter 5 shows how the ‘truth’ about Tibet was produced out of specific processes of imageries and imaginaries throughout the twentieth century. It is a *description* how Western interaction, seen as imperial encounter, has constitutive relation with the imagination of Tibet (Exotica Tibet). Finally, the next two chapters *retheorise* Tibetanness and argue that Tibet is a ‘*re-imag(in)ing*’ construct. Chapter 6 brings out various dynamics, including interaction with the West and Exotica Tibet that constitute Tibetanness as a national identity. Chapter 7 examines the cultural expressions of diasporic Tibetans, highlights the role of Exotica Tibet, and offers a new way of theorising Tibetanness with emphasis on postcoloniality-inspired symbolic geography and cultural identity discourses. Thus, a postcolonial analysis of the poetics and the politics of Exotica Tibet underlines the importance of critically studying Western representations of the non-West within a deparochialised IR.

The effort here has been to challenge the geographical parochialism of both the mainstream and critical IR endeavours. ‘Tibet’ here stands not only for those who identify with it (the Tibetans), but also as a challenge to critical endeavours in IR as well as to postcolonial theorising. It challenges critical IR to look at the productive impact of Western representations of the non-West on the latter. It challenges it to move the focus

from the representer to the represented. Similarly, it exposes the limits of postcolonial theorising which has ignored ‘colonisation’ within the ‘post-colonial’ states. My attempt has been not only to promote a dialogue between postcolonial theory and IR theory, but, more importantly, to adopt a postcolonial critical attitude – that is postcoloniality – to offer new, innovative ways of doing IR analyses. Here I am aware that I am deploying ‘Tibet’ to critique certain ways of thinking, in a manner somewhat similar to orientalists for whom ‘Tibet’ has served only as a category to be *used*, to be *deployed*. My *Orientalising* gesture reflects partly my failure to break out of the pernicious mode of thought set up by the dominant West, and partly a failure of postcolonial thinking that is forced to respond to the West and its knowledge in its own language, on terms set by it.¹ Where my use is different is in my self-consciousness and reflexivity about it, in a strategic deployment that seeks to write back at dominant modes of analyses and challenge the provincialism-in-the-guise-of-universalism characterising these modes. An awareness of ethnocentrism leads to greater self-reflexivity, sensitivity for the Other, and an openness to alternative theoretical perspectives. My own position as a non-Tibetan ‘interested’ observer should be acknowledged.

The thesis is a call for a postcolonial IR theoretical approach, the space for which has been cleared by the post-positivist debates. It challenges the commonplace ignorance of the history of imperialism and colonialism in analysis of supposedly ‘intractable’ political problems in the postcolonial world. It highlights the centrality of the concept of representation to the Western enterprise of knowledge production about its Others. It bares the ‘real’ impact of rhetorical utterances and practices. It explores asymmetrical power relations in the discursive production of ‘Tibet’ as a specific site of West-nonWest encounter² in the twentieth century. It emphasises the (re)productive relation between

¹ I have made no conscious attempt to disguise my politics – for me not only ‘the personal is political’, ‘the political is personal’, ‘the international is personal’, and ‘the personal is international’ (see Enloe 2000), but crucially, ‘the international is political’ and ‘the political is international’.

² West’s encounter with the Other can be defined appropriately by the metaphor of what Ziauddin Sardar calls ‘vampirization’. The relationship is analogous to that of a vampire and its victims.

The villain is...a tragic but all-powerful figure. He has an insatiable desire for blood (conquest, invasion) and can survive only by a never-ending supply of victims (social Darwinism). He can mesmerize his victims and make them willing participants in their victimization (development, modernity). The act of conquest begins with the enticement

representation and identity. It performs a deconstructive cultural analysis of Western images of Tibet by looking at the poetics of representation. This entails recognition of the contingency of identity without giving up the notion of agency. It theorises Tibetan identity discourses as constitutively and performatively produced in relation to Western imaginaries and imageries, the politics of representation. Though Orientalism finds itself 'constantly appropriated, re-worked, and re-accentuated in the utterances of others' (Ha 2000: xii), asymmetrical operation and effect of the power-knowledge nexus remains its main characteristic.

Postcolonial IR, as I have argued, offers an effective understanding of the political and productive effect of Western representational practices, especially on non-Western people. The poetics (the 'how' question) and politics ('what impact' question) of Western representations are legitimate and vital areas of enquiry for IR because these support particular foreign policy regimes and have a productive effect on the identities of political actors. In this thesis, I have focused on the latter. Postcolonial IR appreciates the importance of popular culture for our understanding of world politics. A social constructionist theory of representation inspired primarily, though not exclusively, by Michel Foucault's discursive approach along with Edward Said's orientalism critique allows us to consider the poetics and the politics of Western representational practices and contributes toward debates within IR that seek to deparochialise it. It alerts us to the fact that 'what we take to be "real", what we invoke as the naturalized knoweldge ... is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality ... Although this insight does not in itself constitute a political revolution, no political revolution is possible without a radical shift in one's notion of the possible and the real' (Butler 1999: xxiii).

Thus, the poetics and politics of Exotica Tibet mark a new way of enculturing political analysis and politicising cultural criticism. This seeks to open up the endeavour of IR to new vistas. Hybrid endeavours such as postcolonial international relations theory will

of an innocent buxom maiden (noble savage) and ends with the penetration of teeth in the neck (rape and possession). Once possessed, the victims become physically (colonization) and mentally (postmodernism) a subject of vampire; drained of all humanity, the victim now personifies evil in the emptiest form of sheer Otherness (savage beast) into which any

certainly contribute to changing IR from being a ‘discourse of limits’³ to what I would like to call a *discourse of empowering criticality*.

kind of cultural, social, and intellectual content can be poured at will (orientalism, anthropology, fundamentalism, terrorism) (1992: 515-6).

³ Rob Walker calls IR ‘discourse of limits’ in the sense that it allows only certain questions to be asked and a general silence prevails over key concepts. It marks the extremity of the political space that the political theorists and their derivatives can take for granted (1995: 34).

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Glossary of non-English words

Chinese

Han	term used within Chinese state discourse for ethnic Chinese in order to distinguish them from non-ethnic Chinese (such as Tibetans)
Shaoshu Minzu	minority nationality
Xizang	‘Western treasure house’ – Chinese term for Tibet that refers only to the area now covered by the TAR (Tibetan Autonomous Region – Xizang zizhiqu)
Zang	term for the Tibetan race

Hindi

Dharamshala	temporary house/ guest house, established for charity and religious purposes usually on pilgrimage routes
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Sanskrit

Dharmashala	abode of dharma (‘religion’/ the principle or law that order the universe/ the nature of reality). Dharma is also used as a synonym for Buddhism or Buddhist teaching. Tibetan equivalent of it is <i>chos</i>
pundit	scholar; during the British rule, often used for Indian scholars, agents and cartographers sent clandestinely into Tibet by the British authorities in India to collect information in the late nineteenth century

Tibetan

amban	resident/ political commissioner of the Manchu emperor of China in Lhasa. The post was created in 1727 and disbanded by the thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1913
Amdo	One of the three regions/ provinces of Tibet. Tibetans from Amdo are called Amdowas

avalokitesvara	a bodhisatva who is personified in the body of the Dalai Lama. Bodhisattava (sanskrit) is a person's person who has the 'mind of Enlightenment' and who is set to become a Buddha. The Dalai Lama personifies two forms of Buddha or enlightened being, including Jampeyang (Manjushri) and Chenrezig (Avalokitesvara)
bardo	the stage 'in-between' death and next life
bod pa	'people living in the bod region'
bod	Tibet as it was traditionally called amongst Tibetans
Cholka-sum	all Tibetan-inhabited area ('ethnic' Tibet in Fig. II)
Chos	see Dharma
chos srid gnyis Idan	politics-religion combined (characteristic of traditional Tibetan life)
Chu-zhi Gang-drung	'the 'Four Rivers, Six Ranges', pan-Khampa resistance movement against the Chinese occupation founded in 1957
dobdob	deviant 'fighting' monks
Gelugpa	dominant school of Tibetan Buddhism, sometimes called the 'Yellow Hat' school. The Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas belong to it
Gonpa	monastery
gter ma	'treasure' – a type of religious literature that is 'discovered', that emerges as a result of 're-revelation'
inji	foreigners (Westerners)
Jokhang	most sacred temple in Tibet; also referred to as Tsuglakhang
Kagyupa	the 'Red Hat' school of Tibetan Buddhism led by the Karmapa
Kham	Eastern province of Tibet as traditionally conceived. Tibetans from the area are called Khampas.
khang yul	the land of snows
kob yul	'barbarian' land (sometimes used by Tibetans for Tibet)
lung-gom-pas	Tibetan runners who proceed at extraordinary speeds over extraordinary distances
mchod-yon	Buddhist notion of patron-priest relation

Monlam	‘prayer’; short forms of Monlam Chenmo, the Great Prayer Festival, held traditionally during the third week of the Tibetan New Year
nangpa	Buddhist ‘insiders’
Strong-btsan-sgam-po	(Songtsen Gampo) the strong Tibetan king of seventh century
Thangka	religious painting depicting Buddhist deity, usually hung as a scroll on canvas with silk backing
tsampa	roasted barley flour – marker of Tibetan ethnicity as the staple food in Tibet
tulku	‘manifestation body’/ an incarnate lama. Non-Tibetans translate it as ‘living Buddha’
U-Tsang	traditional name for the two areas of Central Tibet, including Lhasa and Shigatse